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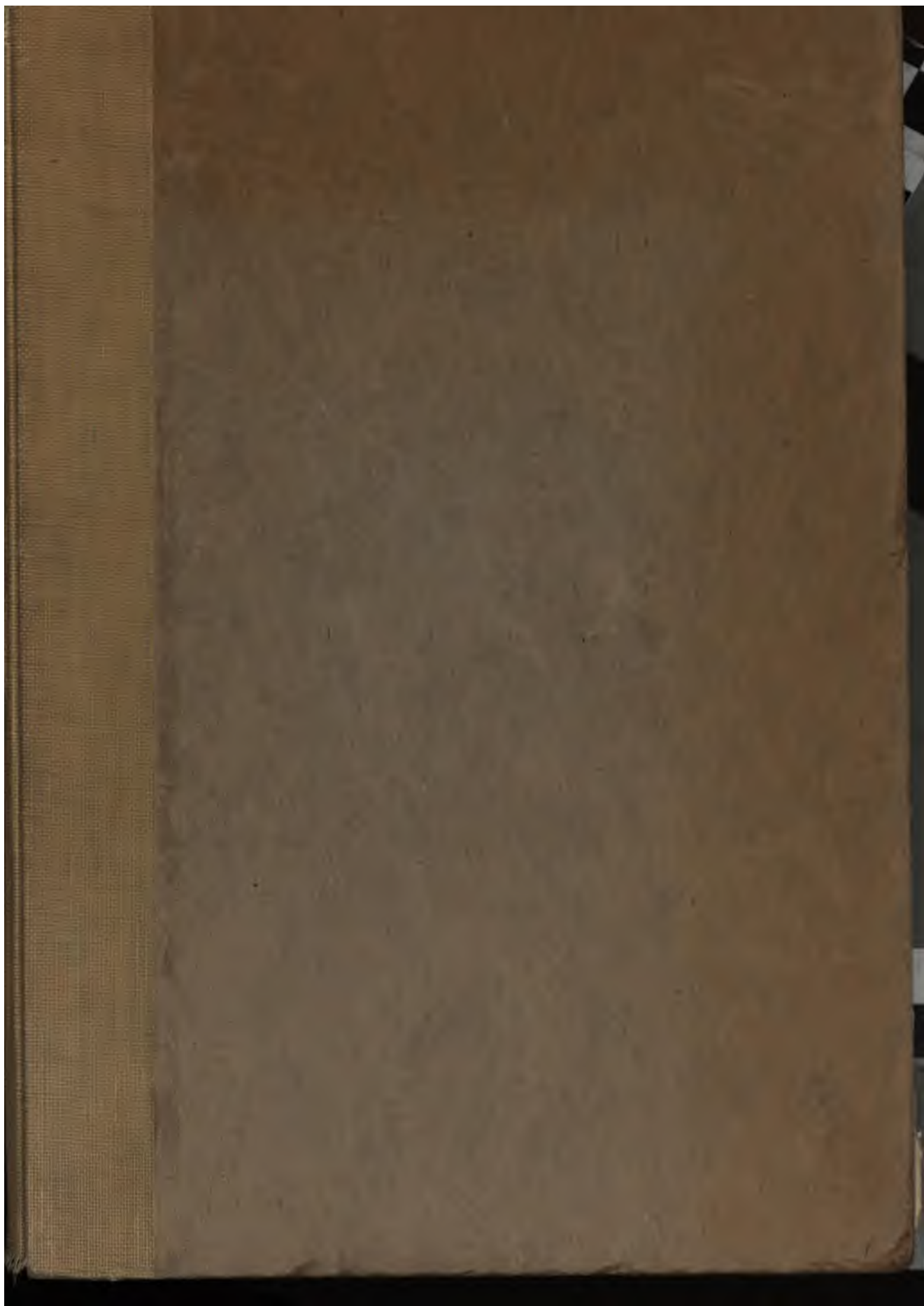
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# ELIZABETHAN CRITICISM OF POETRY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS  
AND LITERATURE IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)

BY

GUY ANDREW THOMPSON

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## PREFACE

The chief value of this study of Elizabethan critical writings on poetry perhaps lies in the attempt to do approximately what Saintsbury says "would lead to inextricable confusion and criss-cross reference," namely, "to trace the development of the same ideas in different writers."<sup>1</sup> The purpose has been to assemble the material under the topics that mainly occupied the interest of the critical writers of the period, and to view the standards and ideals thus exhibited with reference to their application to the contemporary problems of poetry. Consideration of the whole body of material dealt with has impressed the conviction that Elizabethan criticism of poetry—perhaps more independently English, or at least written (often by the poets themselves) more with reference to actual contemporary problems and conditions than may have heretofore been recognized—bears significant and in general consistent relationship to the poetic product of the time, and that a sympathetic knowledge of this criticism is highly important for an adequate understanding and appreciation of Elizabethan poetry.

The critical writings dealt with have been limited chiefly to those that come within the reign of Elizabeth, most of which are included in G. Gregory Smith's edition of *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, a valuable source of material, the obligations to which are hereby acknowledged. In the discussions of certain topics, however, reference has been made to the comments of earlier and later critics. The comments from Bacon, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson have been given for the most part in the footnotes. Jonson's criticism has not been included in the text of the discussion for the reasons that it represents a somewhat later development, and that it has already received careful attention in other studies.

Although the material often tempted discussion of such questions as sources and the classical and romantic elements, considerations of unity and of space made it seem advisable to adhere to the plan outlined, even at the cost of apparent neglect of important topics. Moreover, these topics have been ably treated by other students of Elizabethan criticism. Faithful endeavor has been made to give full and unbiased evidence on the points discussed, and to this end the critics have as much as seemed expedient been allowed to speak for themselves. A brief bibliography, giving the expanded titles of the principal references cited in the footnotes, will be found at the end of this volume.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Literary Criticism*, ii, 37.

The study had its origin in a short paper written under Professor Robert M. Lovett, who gave encouragement to further pursuit of the subject. I am much indebted for valuable advice to Professor Frederick I. Carpenter; to Professor Albert H. Tolman and Professor Charles R. Baskervill for giving their time to the manuscript and making many helpful criticisms; and to Professor John M. Manly for needed encouragement and advice.

G. A. T.

University of Maine  
December, 1912



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## THE STATE OF POETRY; CAUSES; REMEDIES

### I. THE UNSATISFACTORY STATE OF POETRY

Elizabethan criticism of poetry arose largely out of dissatisfaction with the existing state of the art in England and a desire to improve it. The critics agree that poetry has been degraded and discredited, their complaints to this effect beginning early and continuing throughout the period, for in their minds abuses and perversions continue to threaten even during the time of highest poetical excellence.

As early as the second decade of the century, the author of the *Interlude of the Nature of the Four Elements* had complained of "the toys and trifles" then being printed, declaring that though in English there were scarcely "any works of cunning", the most "pregnant wits" were engaged in compiling "ballads and other matters not worth a mite."<sup>1</sup> An inauspicious state of affairs is also reported by Sir Thomas Elyot, who, in *The Governor* (1531), asserts that "for the name of poet . . . now (specially in this realm) men have such indignation, that they use only poets and poetry in the contempt of eloquence."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Drant, in the preface to his translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* (1567), remarks: "We write poesy apace of all hands . . . some with more luck than learning." Roger Ascham writes pessimistically of the English poetry of his time, deploring the fact that the shops in London are "full of lewd and rude rimes"<sup>3</sup> of ignorant versifiers. Stephen Gosson, railing against the "infinite poets and pipers, and such peevish cattle among us in England," and lamenting the dearth of poets of a higher order, says: "If you inquire how many such poets . . . we have in our age, I am persuaded that every one of them may creep through a ring, or dance the wild morris in a needle's eye"; and he is of the opinion that if "they that are in authority . . . should call an account to see how many Chirons, Terpandri, and Homers are here, they might cast

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of English Literature*, iii, 108.

<sup>2</sup> Croft's ed., i, 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Schoolmaster* (1570), Smith, i, 31. All references to "Smith" will be understood to refer to G. Gregory Smith's *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols., Clarendon Press, 1904.

the sum without pen and counters, and sit down with Racha, to weep for her children; because they were not."<sup>4</sup>

Sir Philip Sidney finds England a hard step-mother to poets and poor poetry thrown down to ridiculous estimation, "from almost the highest estimation of learning . . . . fallen to be the laughing-stock of children."<sup>5</sup> Complaining further of this "hard welcome", he declares that "heretofore poets have in England also flourished," but now "they are almost in as good reputation as the mountebanks at Venice." Taking a general survey of English poetry he finds that, although there are swarms of "versifiers", besides Chaucer, the *Mirror for Magistrates*, Surrey's lyrics, and the *Shepherd's Calendar*, he remembers "to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them."<sup>6</sup>

Spenser in his *Shepherd's Calendar* devotes an eclogue to a complaint of the contempt of poetry and, though in so doing he follows poetic tradition, the complaint is evidently in a measure personal and with application to contemporary conditions, being so considered by E. K. and others. Moreover, he gives voice to similar complaints elsewhere, notably in his *Tears of the Muses*, where with acrimony he laments the debased state of poetry and the lack of literary patronage. Peerless poesy, formerly "held in sovereign dignity," "the care of kaisers and of kings," is now shamefully neglected alike by prince and priest and suffered to be profaned by the "base vulgar." The Areopagus movement, in which Spenser and Sidney were both interested, with its schemes for the reform of English versification, arose out of dissatisfaction with the existing conditions, as in general did the "craze for classical metres" and similar movements.

<sup>4</sup> *School of Abuse* (1579), Arber, p. 27. The standard of Barnabe Googe in 1563 (*Eclogues*, Arber, p. 8) was evidently different:

If Chaucer now should live, whose eloquence divine,  
Hath past ye poets all that come of ancient Brutus' line,  
If Homer here might dwell, whose praise ye Greeks resound:  
All these might well be sure their matches here to find.  
So much doth England flourish now with men of Muses' kind.

Drayton corrects this extravagant estimate of the poets of Googe's day. In his epistle *Of Poets and Poesy* he observes that if Gascoigne and Churchyard, who were accounted "great meterers" in the "beginning of Eliza's reign," had

Liv'd but a little longer, they had seen  
Their works before them to have buried been.

<sup>5</sup> *Apology for Poetry* (c. 1583), Smith, i, 151.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, 194, 196.

William Webbe, in entering upon his *Discourse of English Poesy* (1586), deprecates the unsatisfactory character of the poetical activity of his time, and, like some of the other critics, is rather apologetic for dealing with the matter at all; doing so, however, because men of great learning have no leisure to handle it, "or at least having to do with more serious matters do least regard" it. "It is to be wondered at of all," he declares, "and is lamented of many, that whereas all kind of good learning have aspired to royal dignity and stately grace in our English tongue, being . . . . . purged from faults, weeded of errors, and polished from barbarousness, only poetry hath found fewest friends to amend it, those that can reserving their skill to themselves, those that cannot rushing headlong upon it, thinking to garnish it with their devices, but more corrupting it with their fantastical errors. What should be the cause that our English speech, in some of the wisest men's judgments, hath never attained to any sufficient ripeness, nay not full avoided the reproach of barbarousness in poetry?" Although he is proud that England has at last in Spenser "hatched up one poet . . . . . comparable with the best,"<sup>7</sup> yet he deplores the general inferiority of English poetry compared with that of other nations, a state of affairs which he thinks is unnecessary. He sympathizes with Spenser's lament for "the decay of poetry at these days," deprecates the "enormities" of English poetry and the rabble of ballads and "senseless sonnets"; and "by consent of others" takes it upon himself to appeal to lovers of the art to "take compassion of noble poetry, pitifully mangled and defaced by rude smatterers and barbarous imitators"<sup>8</sup> of their worthy studies.

The author of the *Art of English Poesy* (1589), presumably George Puttenham, is less in doubt than Webbe as to the dignity of his subject. However, he avoids attaching his name to his work; and the printer, Richard Field, in dedicating it to Lord Treasurer Burleigh perceives "the title to purport so slender a subject, as nothing almost could be more discrepant from the gravity of your years and honorable function."<sup>9</sup> The author himself, though glad that English poetry is refined from its old "rude and homely manner," deplores the lack of cunning

<sup>7</sup> Smith, i, 227, 263.

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, 229. Cp. Ben Jonson (Ded. *Volpone*, 1607), who hopes in the "maturing of some worthier fruits" to "raise the despised head of poetry again, and stripping her of those rotten and base rags wherewith the times have adulterated her form, restore her to her primitive habit, feature, and majesty, and render her worthy to be embraced and kist of all the great master spirits of our world."

<sup>9</sup> Smith, ii, 2.

poets among noblemen and gentlemen. Moreover, the abasement of the art is daily seen and, compared with "old time," poets have "now become contemptible" and objects of "scorn and ordinary disgrace."<sup>10</sup> Poets and poesy "are despised, and the name become of honorable infamous, subject to scorn and derision, and rather a reproach than a praise to any that useth it: for commonly whoso is studious in the art or shews himself excellent in it, they call him in disdain a phantastical; and a light-headed or phantastical man (by conversion) they call a poet . . . . And among men such as be modest and grave, and of little conversation, nor delighted in the busy life and vain ridiculous actions of the popular, they call him in scorn a philosopher or poet, as much as to say a phantastical man, very injuriously (God wot)."<sup>11</sup>

Further comment as to the unsatisfactory state of poetry is scattered through less pretentious pieces of criticism. Sir John Harington in the preface to his translation of *Orlando Furioso* (1591) deprecates the discredit into which poetry has fallen and is annoyed that among his friends "some grave men misliked that I should spend so much good time on such a trifling work as they deemed a poem to be."<sup>12</sup> Richard Stanyhurst, whose own verse in his translation of Virgil is ridiculed by Thomas Nash, scoffs at the "drafty poetry" and "rude rythming and baldunctum ballads"<sup>13</sup> of the time so objectionable to all the literati. Gabriel Harvey as a connoisseur in polite letters "was wont to jest" at the poetic attempts of some of his contemporaries, but he grows especially vehement

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 16, 21. "Thou call'st me poet, as a term of shame," writes Ben Jonson—*Epigrams*, "To my Lord Ignorant."

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 19. Cf. "Jack of Dover, his Quest or inquiry, or his Privy Search for the Veriest Fool in England" (before 1601). After accounts of fools from many places he concludes that the "fool of all fools is a poet." "There cannot be a verier fool in the world than is a poet: for poets have good wits, but cannot use them; great store of money but cannot keep it; and many friends till they lose them," etc. *Percy Soc.*, vii, 36.

Hamelius, in his *Was dachte Shakespeare über Poesie* (p. 17), speaking of Shakespeare's representation of poets, says: "Die Dichter behandelt er in seinen Dramen nicht viel schonender als die Schauspieler. Von einem Dutzend Dichtern, die er auftreten lässt, sind die meisten verliebte, oft lächerliche Jünglinge, einige Phantasten oder Thoren, und der gescheiteste, der Dichter in Timon von Athen, ein Schmeichler und Speichellecker. Die Scharfsinnigen oder gedankschweren Bemerkungen, die er ihnen bisweilen in den Mund legt, zeugen von ihrem geistigen Werte, aber weigen kaum die Verachtung auf, die er mit ihrem niedrigen Stande und ihrer sittlichen Unwürde verbindet."

<sup>12</sup> Smith, ii, 219.

<sup>13</sup> Ded. *Aeneid* (1582), Smith, i, 140, 141.

in railing against the "barbarous and balductum rimes" that disgrace the art of poetry. Having in mind among others Thomas Nash with "his phantastical bibble-babbles," he remarks with asperity that "the Muses shame to remember some fresh quaffers of Helicon."<sup>14</sup> Nash himself in his preface to Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) declares that before the rising of Astrophel, "England's Sun," night hovered over the gardens of the Muses, "while *Ignis fatuus* and gross fatty flames such as commonly arise out of dunghills" took occasion to wander abroad "and lead men up and down in a circle of absurdity." Now they may put out their rush candles and bequeath their "crazed quaterzayns to the chandlers,"<sup>15</sup> for a new Apollo has risen in England. Here, notwithstanding extravagant phraseology, as likewise in case of E. K.'s enthusiastic heralding of the new poet of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, there is almost a touch of pathos in the exultant pride of the Englishman who has high hopes that at last the disgrace of English poetry may be wiped out.

Still the complaints continue. Dr. Giles Fletcher complains to the readers of his *Licia* (1593) that the age thinks "so basely of our bare English, wherein thousands have travailed with such ill luck, that they deem themselves barbarous, and the island barren, unless they have borrowed from Italy, Spain, and France their best and choicest conceits."<sup>16</sup> Judicio, a character who is made to assume the office of critic in the *Return from Parnassus* (1601), expresses disgust at "slimy rimes as thick as summer flies"<sup>17</sup> that infest the London bookstalls. In a section on poets in *England's Parnassus* (1600), William Warner is quoted on the unhappy status of devotees to poetic art:

As now by melancholy walks and threadbare coats, we guess  
At clients and at poets; none work more, and profit less . . . .  
Yet soothly nods to poets now, are largess, and but lost;  
For Pallas' hermits live secure, obscure in roofs embost.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593), Smith, ii, 274; cf. also 253, 261.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, ii, 225.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller's *Worthies*, vol. iii.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, ii, 399.

<sup>18</sup> *Heliconia*, iii, 287. Cp. Breton, *A Dialogue Full of Pith and Pleasure* (1603; *Works*, Grosart, vi, 15):

*Ant.* Shall we speak of poetry?

*Dina.* What, ballads? Why it is grown to such a pass that the *e* is taken out, and of poetry it is called pottry; why, verses are so common that they are nailed on every post; besides, it is a poor profession.

Thomas Campion in his *Observations on the Art of English Poesy* (1602) voices the frequent deprecation of the "years of barbarism"<sup>19</sup> of English poetry; and Samuel Daniel, his opponent in the rime controversy, deplores the "divers discords"<sup>20</sup> that bring the mystery of poetry into contempt. Sir John Davies protests vehemently against the "bastard sonnets" that daily bring poetry into disgrace, and parodies the fashion to ridicule it.<sup>21</sup>

The critics, it is clear, being earnestly concerned about the contemporary state of poetry in England, are agreed that the art has fallen into disrepute. They are deeply troubled at this and in humiliation acknowledge that the contempt of poetry is not undeserved, that the art is really degraded, mangled, and disgraced, and that, in view of the whole situation, poets of a high order represented in print are lamentably rare. But participating as they do in the optimism of the period, the critics are not discouraged, and their complaints are easily overbalanced by activity in another direction; they set themselves hopefully to the task of discovering causes and furnishing remedies.

## II. CAUSES

### 1. *The Puritan Opposition*

Puritanism is not generally recognized by Elizabethan critics as a serious menace to poetry, nor is puritanism held responsible by these critics as a prominent cause for the contempt of poetry. The idea that such is the case seems to have gained foothold through exaggeration of the importance of Gosson's "pleasant invective" in his *School of Abuse*, and in general through the confused application to non-dramatic poetry of attacks on the drama. Gosson in one place, to be sure, gives a very black aspect to the art of poetry, making it lead to Satan, though through several stages: poetry advances "you to piping, from piping to playing, from play to pleasure, from pleasure to sloth, from sloth to sleep, from sleep to sin, from sin to death, from death to the devil."<sup>1</sup> The major part of his book, however, is devoted to plays and players, his chief concern with respect to poetry being to reprehend the abuses that "in theaters escape the poet's pen." Indeed he tells his readers

<sup>19</sup> Smith, ii, 332.

<sup>20</sup> *Musophilus*, *Works*, i, 227.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Cambridge History*, iii, 305.

<sup>1</sup> *School of Abuse*, Arber, p. 24.

plainly that he sets his ideas down "not . . . . to condemn the gifts of versifying, dancing or singing," even "in women, so they be used with mean, and exercised in due time."<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Lodge, in taking it upon himself to reply to Gosson's attack, attaches more importance to the menace of puritanism than does any other critic, manifesting some anxiety before the "new set of stoics," raised up by Gosson, "that can abide naught but their own shadow, and allow nothing worthy but what they conceive."<sup>3</sup> But though Lodge, somewhat misapprehending Gosson's intent and taking the reformed playwright's "pleasant invective" too seriously, squandered his slender talent on what has been termed an "unreal defense"; yet even he, turning from puritanism, discerns a greater menace to the welfare of poetry in "the abuse which many ill writers color by it,"<sup>4</sup> wherein, without realizing it, he is on precisely the same ground with Gosson. This the latter makes evident in his *Apology of the School of Abuse* in his declaration that poets "think that I banish poetry, wherein they dream . . . . He that readeth with advice the book that I wrote, shall perceive that I touch but the abuses."<sup>5</sup> In this later work, however, Gosson is as vehement as ever against the drama, to which he again devotes his chief attention.<sup>6</sup>

Few other critics are disturbed by puritan opposition to poetry. Sir Philip Sidney is not bothered about puritanism as a menace to poetry nor does he recognize a "puritan attack" as such, his main concern for the welfare of the art being with respect to poet-apes rather than with respect to puritans. Differentiating dramatic from non-dramatic poetry, he gives such a general condemnation of the contemporary state of tragedy and comedy<sup>7</sup> as would certainly meet the approval of Gosson and other enemies of the drama.

The importance of the so-called puritan attack on poetry is further minimized by the comparatively small attention it receives from Nash,

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 23, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, i, 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Arber, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> The circumspection with which Lodge had entered upon the defense of the drama, a rather bold and unusual undertaking, is of significance, indicating as it does the difficulty and precariousness of this task as compared with that of defending poetry,—and it is possible that this part of his refutation may account for the suppression of his pamphlet.

<sup>7</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 196.

who of all the critics is apparently the greatest hater of puritans. In reprehending, in his *Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), the degradation of poetry by "rude rithmours," he says that the art also suffers in another way from the "senseless stoical austerity" of those who account "poetry impiety and wit folly." Such men, he declares, "condemn them of lasciviousness, vanity, and curiosity, who under feigned stories include many profitable moral precepts." And in this "their preciser censure they resemble them that cast away the nut for mislike of the shell."<sup>8</sup> He makes another charge, mildly and tentatively, against puritanical opposition to poetry in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589) where he advances the idea that the swarms of "epitaphers and position poets," who "fly like swallows in the winter from any continuat subject of wit," may possibly be due to the "upstart discipline of our reformatory churchmen, who account wit vanity, and poetry impiety."<sup>9</sup> In his *Pierce Penniless* (1592) he has a "bout" with "some dull-headed divines" by whom he himself has been censured and "who deem it no more cunning to write an exquisite poem than to preach pure Calvin, or distill the juice of a commentary in a quarter sermon"; but against such he sets with praises divines "that have tasted the sweep springs of Parnassus," as "silver-tongued Smith, whose well turned style hath made thy death the general tears of the Muses."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Nash's findings against the puritans are moderate and sparing—as will be noted later—compared with his imputations against the "abusive enormities" of the "ravenous rabble"<sup>11</sup> of versifiers in whom he, like Sidney, sees the arch-enemies of poetry.

Francis Meres remarks in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) that "puritans and precisians detest poetry and poems."<sup>12</sup> The general view of the critics, however, is perhaps best summed up by Sir John Harington, himself a defender of poetry, who, in the preface to his *Orlando Furioso*,

<sup>8</sup> Smith, i, 330.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, 316.

<sup>10</sup> *Works*, McKerrow, i, 192-193. Giles Fletcher (Epist. Ded. to *Licia*, or *Poems of Love*, 1593), in defending particularly the writing of love poetry, says that "two reasons hath made it a thing foolishly odious in this age. The one, that so many base companions are the greatest writers. The other, that our English Genevian purity hath quite debarred us of honest recreation: yet the great Pillar, as they make him [i. e. Jean Calvin], of that cause hath shewed us as much wit and learning in this kind as any other before or since."

<sup>11</sup> Smith, i, 334.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, ii, 310.

declares that "those that condemn all poetry . . . . I count but a very weak faction."<sup>13</sup>

In fact, the conclusion seems warranted that the menace of puritanism, so far as it concerns non-dramatic poetry, has been over-estimated. Gosson himself, to whom the so-called attack has been chiefly ascribed, denies any intention of banishing poetry or of doing more than to "touch" the abuses. The real attitude of the puritans toward non-dramatic poetry is doubtless well exemplified in William Vaughan, himself a puritanical character. In his moralistic book, *The Golden Grove* (1600), he appears in one chapter as a prosecutor in "a diatribe against plays as mere folly and wickedness"; yet, in another chapter, "Of Poetry, and the excellency thereof," he stands forth as an ardent defender of this art. Moreover, according to his experience the defamers of poetry are not puritans, but abusers of puritans. "Sundry times," he says, "have I been conversant with such as blasphemed poetry, by calling it mincing and lying poetry. But it is no marvel that they thus deride poetry, sith they stick not in this out-worn age to abuse the ministers of God by terming them bookish fellows and puritans, they themselves knowing not what they mean." Indeed, the attitude of Vaughan, who supports puritans, is closely parallel to that of Nash, who hates them, as is shown in the former's conclusion "that many of our English rimers and ballet-makers deserve for their bawdy sonnets and amorous allurements to be banished, or severely punished: and that poetry itself ought to be honored and made much of, as a precious jewel and divine gift."<sup>14</sup> A similar point of view is indicated in a work "licensed in January, 1600, which professed to be 'a commendation of true poetry and a discommendation of all bawdy, ribald, and paganized poets.'"<sup>15</sup> Puritanism, it is evident, was not regarded by the critics of this period as seriously threatening non-dramatic poetry, nor did they in any considerable measure hold puritans responsible for the discredit into which the art had fallen.

## 2. *The Rakehelly Rout*

The chief cause for the debasement of poetry, in the minds of Elizabethan critics, was to be found in the extensive and growing participation

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 195. Cp. Isaac Watts (Pref. *Horae Lyricae*, 1706): "This profanation and debasement of so divine an art has tempted some weaker Christians to imagine that poetry and vice are naturally akin."

<sup>14</sup> Smith, ii, 326.

<sup>15</sup> Spingarn, *Lit. Crit.*, p. 267.

in the art of a multitude of low rimesters or "poet-apes," as Sidney terms them. The problem involved in the invasion of the field of poetry by this horde of versifiers, who by their persistent and exasperating activity menaced the very life of the art, was to the critics a problem of tremendous concern and one that largely occupied their thought and energy and influenced the character of their criticism.

Although the rabble of versifiers doubtless deserved all the opprobrium heaped upon them by the critics, they possessed a certain warrant of precedent, the evil that they represented being somewhat grounded in the activity of an earlier generation. Henry VIII, it seems, not limiting his poetic patronage to the courtly makers, gave recognition and encouragement to poets of a lower order. Even the most "pregnant wits" in his time, we are told, were producing work of a quality condemned by the standard of later critics, "ballads and other matters not worth a mite."<sup>16</sup> The king himself gave impetus to the mania for versifying by occasionally writing a sonnet, and by his habit during his progresses of exercising himself daily in singing, playing, and "setting of songs, and making of ballads."<sup>17</sup> Puttenham says that William Gray, the author of several broadsides, grew into "good estimation" with the king, "and afterward with the Duke of Somerset, Protector, for making certain merry ballads, whereof one chiefly was *The hunt is up, the hunt is up*."<sup>18</sup> The poetic zeal of the time, further stimulated by mercenary motives, soon overdid itself, however, and activity in the lower sort of poetry became objectionable, Henry himself suppressing it wholesale when it interfered with his policies.<sup>19</sup>

A specimen passage from a production of a somewhat later date, itself a ballad of poetic criticism, certainly does not speak highly for the general average of the popular English versifiers.

<sup>16</sup> *Cambridge History*, iii, 108

<sup>17</sup> Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden time*, i, p. 50. Cf. Chappell's "Account of an unpublished Collection of Songs and Ballads of King Henry VIII and His Contemporaries"; in *Archaeologia*, xli, part ii, p. 371.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, ii, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Chappell, *op. cit.*, i, p. 53. A proclamation was issued in 1533 to suppress "fond books, ballads, rimes, and other lewd treatises in the English tongue." An act of parliament was passed in 1543 prohibiting the circulation of "printed ballads, plays, rimes, songs and other fantasies," an exception being made in favor of the works of Chaucer; and, "at the beginning of Mary's reign, an edict was made against 'books, ballads, rimes and treatises' which had been 'set out by printers and stationers, of an evil zeal for lucre and covetous of vile gain'" (*Cambridge History*, iii, 108).

"Your ballads of love, not worth a bean,  
 A number there be, although not all;  
 Some be pithy, some weak, some lean,  
 Some do run as round as a ball;  
 Some verses have such a pleasant fall,  
 That pleasure it is for any man,  
 Whether his knowledge be great or small,  
 So that of a verse some skill he can . . . .  
 But some if ye take in hand to scan  
 They lack their grace, they lack good sense."<sup>20</sup>

And the ballading critic goes on to exhort the printer not to "open a gate" to the inferior kind.

At the critical awakening in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, men of letters gradually became possessed of the idea that all was not well with poetry, and that the great menace to the art lay in its perversion and degradation by incapable practitioners. Ascham, reprobatng the intrusion and rash presumption of such men, complains that the shops of London are full of their "lewd and rude rimes"; not the most capable "but now the ripest of tongue be readiest to write,"<sup>21</sup> many "rash ignorant heads" daily putting forth their books and ballads with demoralizing effects on poetry. George Whetstone, though with comedy chiefly in mind, laments that "the advised devices of ancient poets, discredited with trifles of young, unadvised, and rash witted writers, hath brought this commendable exercise into mislike."<sup>22</sup> Lodge, in his reply to Gosson, who had himself railed against the "infinite poets and pipers, and such peevish cattle among us in England,"<sup>23</sup> declares that poetry is dispraised not for itself, but for the abuse it suffers in the hands of ill writers, for "those odd rimes which runs in every rascal's mouth" and "those foolish ballets that are admitted."<sup>24</sup>

In introducing the "new poet" of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, E. K. complains that "most English writers useth to be loose, and as it were ungirt," and in view of Spenser's superiority over these he scorns and spews out "the rakehelly rout of our ragged rimers," who "without judgment jangle, without reason rage and foam."<sup>25</sup> He further takes pains

<sup>20</sup> Jos. Lilly's *Black Letter Ballads and Broad-sides*, p. 206.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, i, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Ded. *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), Smith, i, 59.

<sup>23</sup> *School of Abuse*, Arber, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, i, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Epist. Ded., Smith, i, 131.

to explain Spenser's line in the eclogue in complaint "of the contempt of poetry,"

"Tom Piper makes us better melody,"

as "an ironical sarcasmus, spoken in derision of these rude wits, which make more account of a riming ribald, than of skill grounded upon learning and judgment."<sup>26</sup> Spenser himself in his *Tears of the Muses* still more severely denounces the debasers of poetry, bitterly deprecating the participation in the art,

Of the base vulgar that with hands unclean  
Dares to pollute her hidden mystery:  
And treadeth under foot her holy things,  
Which was the care of kaisers and of kings.

An ignorant and brutish rout has invaded the chaste bowers of the Muses and stained them with beastly filth. The sacred springs of Helicon,

So oft bedewed with our learned lays . . . . .  
They trampled have with their foul footings trade,  
And like to troubled puddles have them made.

The Muses' royal thrones, which lately ruled the hearts of men, have been rudely usurped by the accursed brood of Ignorance, and

They to the vulgar sort now pipe and sing,  
And make them merry with their fooleries . . . . .  
They feed the ears of fools with flattery,  
And good men blame and losels magnify . . . . .  
So everywhere they rule and tyrannize,  
For their usurped kingdom's maintenance,  
The whiles we silly maids, whom they despise,  
And with reproachful scorn discountenance,  
From our own native heritage exiled,  
Walk through the world of everyone reviled.

This usurpation is especially demoralizing in the poetry of love:

Such high conceit of that celestial fire,  
The base-born brood of blindness cannot guess,  
Never dare their dunghill thoughts aspire  
Unto so lofty pitch of perfectness,  
But rime at riot, and do rage in love;  
Yet little wot what doth thereto behooove.

<sup>26</sup> Spenser's *Works*, Globe ed., p. 479.

"Each idle wit," the poet declares, "at will presumes to make," and such men, who "dare their follies forth so rashly throw," not only degrade poetry but also deter real poets from exercising their talents publicly because of such base company.

The intrusions of the rabble of rimesters are particularly offensive to Gabriel Harvey, who does not scruple to call out the names of the worst offenders, from whom he desires immeasurable separation. For instance, he professes extreme indignation at being thrust into print in his "extemporal faculty and to play Wilson's or Tarlton's part" or "be M. Churchyard's and M. Elderton's successors too, and finally chronicled for one of the most notorious ballat makers and Christmas carolers in the time of her Majesty's reign."<sup>27</sup> Stanyhurst, whose own poetical ability like Harvey's was questioned by his contemporaries, likewise inveighs against the invading host of aspiring poets. "What Tom Towly," he inquires with asperity, "is so simple that will not attempt to be a rithmour?" and he attempts to discredit and discourage the "divers scavengers of drafty poetry" by quoting some of their absurd lines on the praise of a dagger, or on the commendation of bacon. "Good God," he exclaims, "what a fry of such wooden rythmours doth swarm in stationers' shops!" and he exhorts the learned to bestir themselves "to flap these drones from the sweet scenting hives of poetry."<sup>28</sup>

Sir Philip Sidney, answering his own inquiry "why England . . . . should be grown so hard a step-mother to poets" and why poetry has been "thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation,"<sup>29</sup> adds his testimony to that of the other critics by attributing the degraded state of the art to the work of "profane wits" who abuse it, the swarms of "versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets."<sup>30</sup> Some distinction perhaps might be made between the contempt of some members of the upper classes for all poetry and the humanists' scorn for popular poetry. But Sidney shows that the general cause for animadversion is in both cases the same. The fundamental cause for the evil condition of poetry is that "base men with servile wits undertake it: who think it enough if they can be rewarded of the printer." Such men "no more but setting their name to it, by their own disgracefulness disgrace most graceful poesy. For now, as if the muses were got with child, to bring forth

<sup>27</sup> *Letter-Book*, Smith, i, 124, 125.

<sup>28</sup> *Ded. Transl. Aeneid*, Smith, i, 141.

<sup>29</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 155, 193.

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.* 160, 206.

bastard poets, without any commission they do post over the banks of Helicon, till they make the readers more weary than post-horses." Graciously including himself with the other "paper-blurrers," Sir Philip finds that "the very true cause of our wanting of estimation is want of desert; taking upon us to be poets in despite of Pallas."<sup>81</sup> Again he puts his conclusion of the whole matter concisely, "the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of poet-apes, not poets."

Webbe states that among the innumerable books and "infinite fardels" of pamphlets with which England "is pestered" and "all shops stuffed" the greatest part are "poetical" or "tend in some respect . . . to poetry." But he regrets to find that for the most part poetry is left to the mercy of ignorant men who run headlong upon it, "thinking to garnish it with their devices, but more corrupting it with fantastical errors."<sup>82</sup> In giving his account of the English poets he lets "pass the uncountable rabble of riming ballat makers and compilers of senseless sonnets, who be most busy to stuff every stall full of gross devices and unlearned pamphlets." "If these might be accounted poets," he declares, "surely we shall shortly have whole swarms of poets." He ends his own invective against them by quoting E. K.'s animadversion on "the rakehelly rout," he himself, desiring not to be "too broad with them," though all through there rankles in his breast the feeling that "noble poetry is pitifully mangled and defaced by rude smatterers and barbarous imitators of . . . worthy studies."<sup>83</sup>

Nash, who in his *Anatomy of Absurdity* pays his respects to abuses in general, is of all the critics the most vehement in denouncing the perverters of poetry. The "impudent publishing of witless vanity" and the depredations of "ignorant artificers" are to him much more offensive than the "stoical austerity" of puritanism. Indeed he is for taking severe measures against the ignorant, babbling versifiers who "obtain the name of our English poets, and thereby make men think more basely of the wits of our country," and he deems it desirable that their works "were by public edict prohibited." These "rude rithmours with their jarring verse" have so defaced poetry that they "alienate all men's minds from delighting in numbers' excellence." Stainers of art as they are, their works breed detestation for poetry and make the learned silent when "they see unlearned sots so insolent." Nash pleads for the sup-

<sup>81</sup> *Ib.*, 195, 205.

<sup>82</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 226, 227.

<sup>83</sup> *Ib.*, 229, 246-7.

pression of this "ravenous rabble" and has much more to say against their "abusive enormities," all of which he speaks "to shew what an obloquy these impudent incipients in arts are unto art."<sup>34</sup> In his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, he further inveighs against these devastators of poetry, promising his readers to "persecute those idiots and their heirs unto the third generation, that have made art bankrupt of her ornaments, and sent poetry a begging up and down the country."<sup>35</sup>

Shorter comment in reprobation of low and rude versifiers is to be found in many other writers of the period. Among others, Puttenham, the self-appointed courtier critic, shows contempt for the rude fits of mirth of the "tavern minstrels" with their "old romances" made for the "recreation of the common people at Christmas dinners and brideales, and in taverns and alehouses, and such other places of base resort."<sup>36</sup> In the work of the courtly maker all such crudeness must be banished utterly. Sir John Harington likewise refers with scorn to the "base rimer and ballad-maker" of the time, and deprecates the rash abuse of poetry "by profane wits, in whom science is corrupted, like good wine in a bad vessel."<sup>37</sup> Giles Fletcher, in his Epistle Dedicatory to *Licia* (1593), declares that one reason why poetry is so "foolishly odious in this age" is that "so many base companions are the greatest writers." A vigorous protest comes a little later from Sir John Davies, who inveighs against "bastard sonnets" and the work of "base rimers" daily begot "to their own shame and poetry's disgrace."<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Breton in *Pasquil's Madcap* (1600) satirically "advised 'prose writers' to

<sup>34</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 327, 328, 334. "Every balductum makes divine poetry to be but base rime," complains the author of *Polimanteia*, Pref. to the Reader. Cp. "Epigrams," by I. C. (*New Shakespeare Soc.* [1874], p. 122):

These fellows are the slanderers of the time,  
Make riming hateful through their bastard rime.  
But were I made a judge in poetry,  
They all should burn for their wild heresy.

Bishop Hall (*Virgidemiarum*, Bk. I, Satire VIII) attacks literary pretenders participating in the vogue of writing religious poetry:

Hence ye profane! mell not with holy things  
That Zion's Muse from Palestina brings.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, i, 320.

<sup>36</sup> *Art of English Poetry*, Smith, i, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 197, 203.

<sup>38</sup> *Cambridge History*, iii, 305.

change their occupation, in consequence of the greater success of the authors of 'penny ballads.'"<sup>39</sup>

The havoc wrought by the rimesters is especially deplored by Henry Chettle, who, in the dedication of his *Kind-Heart's Dream* (1592), declares that "such is the folly of this age, so witless, so audacious, that there are scarce so many peddlers brag themselves to be printers because they have a bundle of ballads in their pack, as there be idiots that think themselves artists because they can English an obligation, or write a true staff to the tune of fortune."<sup>40</sup> He lashes especially broad-side balladists, and presumably ridicules Anthony Munday as an adviser to the "arch-overseers of the ballad singers,"<sup>41</sup> who chant their absurdities in every street.

The contemptuous complaints of the critics against the low rimesters are seconded by the dramatists. Chappell gives a page of quotations<sup>42</sup> from them, showing their antagonism to the plethora of rude versifying. Moreover, the abuse as reported in such general accounts as that of Chettle is vividly represented in the concrete on the stage,—for example, by Shakespeare in his *Winter's Tale* and by Ben Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair*. Shakespeare also makes Falstaff threaten Prince Hal and his companions with the dire vengeance of having ballads made on them;<sup>43</sup> and Cleopatra dreads lest "scald rimers ballad us out o' tune."<sup>44</sup> Ballading is further turned to ridicule in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the mania for versifying is laughed at in *Love's Labor's Lost*.

The degradation of poetry by the invading hosts of versifiers is regarded as a vexatious problem by Bishop Hall, who in his *Martin Mar-sixtus* (1592) confesses, "I loath to speak it, every red-nosed rimester is an author; every drunken man's dream is a book; and he, whose talent of little wit is hardly worth a farthing, yet layeth about him so outrageously as if all Helicon had run through his pen: in a word, scarce a cat can look out of a gutter, but out starts a halfpenny chronicler, and presently a proper new ballet of a strange sight is indited."<sup>45</sup> The abuse of poetry is further exhibited by Hall in his *Satires* (1597); for example:

<sup>39</sup> Collier, J. P., *Roxburghe Ballads*, p. xxii.

<sup>40</sup> *Percy Soc.*, v, p. vii.

<sup>41</sup> *Ib.*, p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> *Popular Music*, i, 253.

<sup>43</sup> I *Henry IV*, II, ii, 48. Cf. also II *Henry IV*, iii, 49.

<sup>44</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, V, ii, 215.

<sup>45</sup> Chappell, *Popular Music*, ii, 106.

Should Bondell's throstle die without a song,  
 Or Adamans my dog be laid along  
 Down in some ditch, without his obsequies,  
 Or epitaphs or mournful elegies?

and:

Some drunken rimer thinks his time well spent,  
 If he can live to see his name in print;  
 Who when he once is fleshed to the press,  
 And sees his handsell have such fair success,  
 Sung to the wheel and sung unto the pail,  
 He sends forth thraves of ballads to the sale.<sup>46</sup>

Samuel Daniel in his *Musophilus* (1602) deplores the ill consequences of the extensive participation of inferior writers in poetic composition, though taking the attitude of Ben Jonson rather than that of earlier court poets, he believes that instead of giving up the field to the rimesters, poets of a higher order should enter in and sing the louder:

Besides, so many so confusedly sing,  
 Whose divers discords have the music mar'd,  
 And in contempt that mystery doth bring,  
 That he must sing aloud that will be heard.<sup>47</sup>

Although Daniel does not countenance these inferior practitioners, he takes, compared with the other critics, a remarkably broad and philosophic view, considering it impossible and perhaps unnecessary to suppress them, for "this multitude of idle writers can be no disgrace to the good . . . . the same unmeasurable confluence of scribblers" existed "among the Romans" and "their plenty seems to have bred the same waste and contempt as ours doth now."<sup>48</sup> However, he looks forward optimistically to the time when poetry will be

Cleared from th'oppressing humors wherewithal  
 The idle multitude surcharge their lays.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Warton, *History Eng. Poetry*, iv, 371, 373. One of the versifiers of the period in injured innocence apparently anticipating criticism, prefixes the following couplet to his ballad (Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, p. xxiv):

I know no reason but that this harmless riddle  
 May as well be printed as sung to a fiddle.

<sup>47</sup> *Works*, i, 227.

<sup>48</sup> *Defense of Rime* (?1603), Smith, ii, 363-4.

<sup>49</sup> *Musophilus*, *Works*, i, 231.

The remarkable poetical activity of a low order so often deplored by contemporary critics and other writers, is marveled at by later literary historians. Chappell, citing Dr. Drake's list (in his *Shakespeare and his Times*) "of two hundred and thirty-three British poets (forty major, and one hundred and ninety-three minor), who were contemporaries with Shakespeare," declares that "even that list, large as it is, might be greatly extended from miscellanies and from ballads."<sup>50</sup> Joseph Lilly is "astonished at the great number of ballads, which, from the opening were licensed for publication. . . . During the first ten years of the reign of Elizabeth, the names of about forty printers from whose presses ballads were issued appear in the registers of the Stationers' Company."<sup>51</sup> Commenting on this same kind of activity, Chappell says that "some idea of the number of ballads that were printed in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth may be formed from the fact that 796 ballads, left for entry at the Stationers' Hall, remained in the cupboard of the council chamber of the company at the end of the year 1560, to be transferred to the new wardens, and only forty-four books."<sup>52</sup> The vogue of these popular versifiers continued and increased, "page after page in the Stationers' books" being "thick dotted, throughout the reign, with entries of their works, Richard Jones registering, for instance, in 1586, one hundred and twenty-three ballads at once."<sup>53</sup>

The critics of this period evidently were agreed that the great force working to the detriment of poetry was to be found in those who abused it.<sup>54</sup> Their battle of defense was largely against an invading host of

<sup>50</sup> *Popular Music*, i, 105.

<sup>51</sup> *Black Letter Ballads*, Introd., pp. x, xi.

<sup>52</sup> *Popular Music*, ii, 105.

<sup>53</sup> Jusserand, *Literary History*, ii, 405. George Wither (*Scholars' Purgatory*, 1635) complained that the stationers' warehouses contained thousands of "vain songs and profane ballads."

<sup>54</sup> Ben Jonson (Ded. *Volpone*, 1607) says: "It being an age wherein poetry and the professors of it hear so ill [i. e., are so ill spoken of] on all sides, there will a reason be looked for in the subject. It is certain, nor can with any forehead be opposed, that the too much license of poetasters, in this time, hath much deformed their mistress; that, every day, their manifold and manifest ignorance doth stick unnatural reproach upon her: but for their petulance, it were an act of the greatest injustice, either to let the learned suffer, or so divine a skill (which indeed should not be attempted with unclean hands) to fall under the least contempt . . . . I cannot but be serious in a cause of this nature, wherein my fame, and the reputation of divers honest and learned are the question; when a name so full of authority, antiquity, and all great mark, is, through their insolence, become the

versifiers, men of inferior ability and often of low character, whose work tended to degrade and debase poetic art and bring it into disrepute. To correct the abuse, to preserve poetry from the depredations of these men, was the problem that perhaps first of all engaged their attention and called forth their energies; indeed it was this problem that in large measure gave rise to their critical writings on poetry and that strongly influenced the character of their criticism. But the abusers of poetry, ranging in quality from the lowest of the ragged penny balladists to the poet-apes who mangled and perverted the elegant conceits of Petrarch, all eagerly in quest of gain or fame, were exasperatingly audacious and persistent and hard to silence. For all these camp-followers of the Renaissance, whose voices in literature are now for the most part silent, "claimed a place in the sunlight" and with their rubbish flooded the stalls of the booksellers. The printing press and mercenary printers afforded a vehicle for the dispersion of their productions and the great careless, indiscriminating public accepted and enjoyed all, from the best to the worst. Such were the conditions faced by the critics and to them the task of saving poetry seemed indeed difficult.

### 3. *The Uncapable Multitude*

Back of the host of Elizabethan versifiers was a vaster host of uncultured, indiscriminating readers, and in them the critics found another perplexing hindrance to the welfare of poetry. The people, they found, shared in the love of poetry, and by means of the democratic institution of printing their untrained taste was cheaply and abundantly supplied.

By the time of the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, various influences had concurred to establish among critics and men of letters a higher standard of taste than had existed before, manifestations of which are not wanting. Tottel, the publisher of the *Miscellany* of 1557, solicitous to foster a taste for the "stateliness of style removed from the rude skill of common ears," appeals to the learned to support their learned friends and exhorts "the unlearned, by reading to learn to be more skillful, and to purge that swine-like grossness that maketh the sweet marjoram not to smell to their delight."<sup>55</sup> Ascham, by virtue of his intimacy with the

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lowest scorn of the age; and those men subject to the petulancy of every vernacular orator, that were wont to be the care of kings and happiest monarchs. This it is that hath not only rapt me to present indignation, but made me studious heretofore, and by all my actions, to stand off from them."

<sup>55</sup> Printer to Reader, Arber ed.

masterpieces of the Greeks and Romans, had developed a very exacting taste, and according to his own account a high degree of culture is likewise happily to be found in the refined literary judgments of Elizabeth, who, doubtless owing largely to Ascham's tutorage, was much more discriminating than her father, that encourager and abettor of the despised balladists. Ascham's classical culture, too, led him to reprehend the rashness of writers who stooped to popular taste, "pleasing the humor of a rude multitude,"<sup>66</sup> and thereby fostering a low standard.

Critics and poets of less training than Ascham censured the bad taste of English readers, though naturally the deleterious influences of uncultured readers, less patent than the offenses of those who ministered to their taste, were less subject to reprehension. Gascoigne, whose own standards were questioned by some of his contemporaries, in putting forth his *A Hundreth Sundry Flowers* (1573), assumes an attitude of contempt for vulgar readers, thereby differentiating himself from poets who cater to a lower standard of taste. Lodge, though with dramatic poetry chiefly in mind, complains of conditions under which "our men dare not nowadays presume so much as the old poets might, and therefore they apply their writing to the people's vein."<sup>67</sup>

In introducing the new poet and the superior poetry of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, E. K. finds one of the chief obstacles to a favorable reception to be an unprepared audience. In view of this it was deemed advisable by himself and his author to preface the poem by a careful explanatory introduction, a principal object of which was to anticipate the "shame" of readers who "whatso they understand not they straightway deem to be senseless and not at all to be understood." Moreover, on account of deficiencies of taste and perception on the part of English readers, E. K. adds a gloss in order that "many excellent and proper devices, both in words and matter," might not be lost upon them "either as unknown or as not marked."<sup>68</sup> Spenser himself in the tenth eclogue of the *Shepherd's Calendar* bitterly taunts contemporary taste in its effect on poetry

<sup>66</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 31. Thomas Drant, in the preface to his translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* (1567), complains that "flim flams and gew gaws, be they never so slight and slender, are sooner rapt up than are those which be lettered and clerkly makings."

<sup>67</sup> Smith, i, 83.

<sup>68</sup> *Ib.*, 130, 132. Cp. Touchstone to Audrey: "When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child Understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room" (*As You Like It*, III, iii, 12.)

in his "ironical sarcasmus," "Tom Piper makes us better melody." In his *Tears of the Muses* he laments the fact that the "accursed brood" of ignorant scribblers make the "vulgar sort" merry with their fooleries and "reign in liking of the multitude." Further deploring the baleful effects on "noble poesy" of a horde of uncultured readers, he complains that, after Elizabeth, herself a peerless poetess,

Some few beside this sacred skill esteem . . . . .  
But all the rest as born of salvage brood,  
And having been with acorns always fed,  
Can no whit this celestial food.

Webbe, from the scholastic point of view, complains of the inability of the times "to discern between good writers and bad";<sup>59</sup> and Stanyhurst, taking the attitude of most translators of poetry from Caxton down, scorns untutored readers and reprobates the injury to poetry due to their patronage of the fry of "wooden rythmours."<sup>60</sup> Puttenham, the courtier, censures the taste of the "common people," who in their "natural ignorance" are "as well satisfied with that which is gross, as with any other finer and more delicate,"<sup>61</sup> and further deplores the detriment to poetry proceeding from "the barbarous ignorance of the times, and pride of many gentlemen and others, whose gross heads not being brought up or acquainted with any excellent art . . . . they do deride and scorn it in all others as superfluous."

Nash in his preface to the *Astrophel and Stella* of Sir Philip Sidney—whose own treatise on poetry was written with a strong realization of the deficiencies of contemporary English taste and the inability of the times to discriminate between poets and poet-apes—excuses his "presumption for offering to put up any motion of applause in the behalf of so excellent a poet." But, like E. K., apparently fearing that it may be a case of casting pearls, he implies reflections against the taste and perception of prospective readers, declaring that "jewels oftentimes come to their hands that know not their value . . . . the coxcombs of our days, like Esop's cock, had rather have a barley kernel wrapt up in a ballet than they will dig for the wealth of wit in any ground that they know not."<sup>62</sup> This lack of taste on the part of English readers of poetry elicits further

<sup>59</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 227.

<sup>60</sup> *Ded. Aeneid*, Smith, i, 141.

<sup>61</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 19, 86. Cp. Ben Jonson (*Pref. Alchemist*): "For it is only the disease of the unskillful to think rude things greater than polished; or scattered more numerous than composed."

<sup>62</sup> Smith, ii, 224.

comment from Nash in his *Anatomy of Absurdity*. "He that will seek for a pearl," he says, "must learn how to know it when he sees it . . . and they that covet to pick more precious knowledge out of poets' amorous elegies must have a discerning knowledge before they can aspire to the perfection of their desired knowledge."<sup>63</sup> Writers themselves, Nash finds, are sometimes as deficient in this respect as readers, some of them as soon entertaining in their libraries "a tale of John a Brainford" "as the best poem that ever Tasso eternisht," in their "undiscerning judgment" making "dross as valuable as gold."<sup>64</sup> "Alas, poor Latinless authors," he writes again in *Pierce Penniless*, "they are so simple they know not what they do; they no sooner spy a new ballad, and his name to it that compiled it: but they put him in for one of the learned men of our time." "Every gross brained idiot is suffered to come into print, who if he set forth a pamphlet of the praise of pudding-pricks, or write a treatise of Tom Thumb, or the exploits of Untruss; it is bought up thick and threefold, when better things lie dead."<sup>65</sup>

Among others finding in the want of cultivation and taste of readers an obstacle to poetry, Harington deplores the folly of people "that understand it not";<sup>66</sup> and Harvey in sarcasm exclaims against the taste of the times: "A phantastical rimester more vendible than the notablist mathematician . . . Robin Good-fellow the meetest author for Robin Hood's library!"<sup>67</sup> Harvey's "sarcasmus," like Spenser's, is supported by such accounts of the indiscriminate thirst for popular verse as are given by Henry Chettle and reflected in the drama by Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. "The people," says Chettle, "delight to hear some new thing."<sup>68</sup> Mopsa was made to speak for more than herself in her declaration, "I love a ballad in print, o' life."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Smith, i, 333.

<sup>64</sup> *Ib.*, 310. Cp. Robert Laneham's *Letter on Captain Cox's library* (1575). Laneham mentions the titles of several ballads, songs, and tales and says, "A hundred more he hath, fair wrapt up in parchment and bound with a whipcord." "I believe he have them all at fingers' ends." "Scarcely any of the private records of this time," says Sheavyn (*The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age*, p. 147), "contain poems of literary value. It is the same with the printed literature exchanged."

<sup>65</sup> *Works*, McKerrow, i, 159, 194.

<sup>66</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 195.

<sup>67</sup> *Pierce's Supererogation*, Smith, ii, 251.

<sup>68</sup> *Kind-Heart's Dream*, *Percy Soc.*, v, 19. George Wither (*Scholars' Purgatory*, 1635) complains bitterly of the hundreds of pounds spent yearly on "vain songs and profane ballads", the stationers' warehouses containing thousands of them.

<sup>69</sup> *Winter's Tale*, IV, iv, 263.

Bishop Hall, though he hopes that his satire possesses something of the distinction of that of Juvenal, pleads guilty to the "obvious cavil" of "too much stooping," for the sake of being understood, "to the low reach of the vulgar."<sup>70</sup> Chapman, assuming the more independent attitude of the learned translator of Homer, and limiting his prefatory remarks "to the understander," who is "not everybody," scorns the "idle capacities" that are not expected to be "comprehensible of an elaborate poem."<sup>71</sup> Most writers, however, feel that the public must be taken into account as an important influence on the state of poetry. Drayton, for instance, expressly ascribes the neglect of best writers to the popular taste for inferior work.

Base balladry is so belov'd and sought,  
And those brave numbers are put by for naught,  
Which, rarely read, were able to awake  
Bodies from graves . . . . .  
. . . . . But I know ensuing ages shall  
Raise her again who now is in her fall,  
And out of dust reduce our scattered rimes,  
Th' rejected jewels of these slothful times.<sup>72</sup>

The remarks of Samuel Daniel: "we write" for the "general sort," and "suffer then the world to enjoy that which it knows, and what it likes,"<sup>73</sup> express a most heretical attitude out of accord with the critical

<sup>70</sup> *Complete Poems*, Grosart, pp. 103-5.

<sup>71</sup> Pref. *Iliad*, Smith, ii, 304.

<sup>72</sup> "To Master George Sandys."

<sup>73</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 363. In his *Musophilus* Daniel asserts his independence of readers in general:

And for my part, if only one allow  
The care my laboring spirits take in this,  
He is to me a theater large enow,  
And his applause only sufficient is . . . . .  
But what if none? it cannot yet undo  
The love I bear unto this holy skill.

Cp. Ben Jonson (*Apologetical Dialogue*, at end of *Poetaster*):

Where if I prove the pleasure but of one,  
So he judicious be, he shall be alone  
A theater unto me.

And Shakespeare (*Hamlet* III, ii, 29): ". . . . . the judicious . . . . . the censure of the which one must . . . . . o'erweigh a whole theater of others."

opinion of the time; the general attitude of the critics being summed up rather by the view expressed in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*,<sup>74</sup> that if men would but learn "to distinguish spirits," and to discriminate between jaded hireling wits and the "high raptures" of immortal poets they would not then, with "dudgeon censures, stab at poesy"; and further expressed in the original quarto of *Every Man in His Humor* where the "fat judgments of the multitude" are reprobated and the fact deplored,

that this barren and infected age  
Should set no difference twixt these empty spirits  
And a true poet.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Act I, sc. ii.

<sup>75</sup> Act V, sc. i. The lack of discrimination in popular taste is a problem that evidently causes Jonson much solicitude and his expressions of absolute scorn may usually be construed as attempts at correction. At the end of *Every Man in His Humor*, quarto edition, the speaker declares:

The cates that you have tasted were not seasoned  
For every vulgar palate, but prepared  
To banquet pure and apprehensive ears . . . .  
Be their applause the trumpet to proclaim  
Defiance to rebelling ignorance.

In his address "To the Reader" prefixed to *The Alchemist*, the author complains that the poetasters who mock at terms of art "are esteemed the more learned and sufficient for this by the many, through their excellent vice of judgment." In the Prologue to *Cynthia's Revels* the "doubtful author" hopes for an understanding appreciation at Court.

To other weaker beams his labors close,  
As loath to prostitute their virgin strain,  
To every vulgar and adulterate brain.

His Muse neither loves nor fears "pied Ignorance,"—

Nor hunts she after popular applause,  
Or foamy praise that drops from common jaws;  
The garland that she wears their hands must twine,  
Who can both censure, understand, define  
What merit is.

Shakespeare, though apparently not averse to pleasing the multitude, also indicates contempt for vulgar taste. He dedicates his *Venus and Adonis* to a noble patron, prefixing a haughty epigraph from Ovid: "*Vilia miretur vulgus.*" The play of Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is only less complimentary to the taste of the "people" than is *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Hamlet's remarks show little respect for the popular judgment: "For the play, I remember, pleased not the million 'twas caviare to the general: but it was . . . an excellent play,"—"the groundlings, who for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and

The critics of this period, having partaken of that which gave them a knowledge of good and evil in things literary, condemned the less fortunate multitude for their inability to distinguish between "acorns" and more "celestial food." The wine of poetry being broached for them by means of the printing press, the masses were too well content to quaff but its froth and dregs. Most of the critics, notwithstanding their general assumption of the aristocracy of letters, were not unwilling to grant the people the benefits of poetry; but they objected very strongly to having English poetic standards lowered by the demoralizing influences of popular bad taste. The problem was difficult; for, not yet purged of the abhorred barbarism of old times and in their "fat judgments" not knowing a pearl when they saw it, exasperatingly content with barley kernels wrapped up in ballads, the common people in great numbers had come into a participation in the printed page. To them all sorts of versified journalistic rubbish as well as ridiculous imitations of the amorous ditties of the court were highly acceptable,—and they were not to be deterred, their wants being abundantly supplied. Thus was poetic art lowered and the profession of poet discredited. This state of affairs, the critics deemed, was highly detrimental to the interests of poetry and a reproach to the nation, and they exerted themselves to save the art from degradation through the perverting influence of "the uncappable multitude."

#### 4. *The Lack of Talent and of Patronage*

Poetry suffers further, the critics find,—largely in consequence of the degradation due to the rimesters and the bad taste of the people—from the non-participation, at least in print, of men of culture and poetic genius, and from the lack of patronage of the noble and great.

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noise,"—"now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theater of others."

For similar complaints of the deleterious influence of the bad taste of the people and of authors lowering standards by pandering to it, cf. H. S. Symmes' *Crit. Dram.*, pp. 92, 146, 164, 197, 198. Lyly ascribes to the audience the responsibility for the mixed drama; Ben Jonson finds that to please the people concessions from the observance of classic rules must be made; and Martson and others make similar complaints of the evil effects of the low taste of the populace. Webster's remarks in the preface to his *White Devil* are significant as to the influence of the persistent pressure of popular taste. What is the use, he complains, of laboriously composing "sententious tragedy . . . observing all the critical laws, as height of style and gravity of person," when "the breath that comes from the uncappable multitude is able to poison it?"

Elizabethan literary men of rank, unwilling to place themselves on a level with the "scribbling rascality," usually disdained to print their works. Satellites of the nobility or court, dependent upon their poetic talent to advance their fortunes, entered more or less cautiously into print with the hope of gaining some kind of preferment. But noblemen like Surrey and Sidney held elegantly aloof from the democratic vehicle that would disperse their works among the multitude, alongside those of the despised rabble of versifiers, and perhaps subject them to ridiculous imitation. With a man like Phaer, who prints his translation of Virgil for the "honest recreation of you the nobility,"<sup>76</sup> it was different; and likewise with Spenser, for, possessing poetic genius but lacking wealth or rank, he was constrained, to the great joy of the critics and well-wishers of poetry, to enter the field with the rest (though at first anonymously), striving, however, so to differentiate himself from the rabble as to gain the favor and patronage of those in high place.

The view of the critics that poetry suffers loss from lack of participation of the best wits is manifested by E. K. in his triumphant heralding of Spenser, the new found champion, by virtue of whose superior excellence he scorns and spews out the "rakehelly rout" of jangling rimers. To increase the triumph and further to advance English poetry, E. K. hopes that his author, though "he nothing so much hateth as to promulgate," will now that the ice is broken "put forth divers other excellent works of his which sleep in silence."<sup>77</sup> Still further evincing his enthusiasm and solicitude for the cause of poetry, E. K. also exhorts Spenser's friend, Gabriel Harvey, another who hesitates to print, to bring "forth to eternal light" his "many English poems."

Spenser's reluctance to "promulgate" his works is further manifested by the poet himself in a letter to Harvey in which he speaks of his hesitation to publish his *Shepherd's Calendar*, among other reasons because he might seem "for gain or commodity to do it."<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding this scruple, however, Spenser voices very strongly the frequent complaint

<sup>76</sup> Warton's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iv, 221.

<sup>77</sup> Epist. Ded. to *Shepherd's Calendar*. L. Blunderston, the printer of Googe's *Eclogues, Epitaphs, and Sonnets* (1562), addressing the reader, hopes that the reception of the work may be such as to "encourage others to make thee partaker of the like or far greater jewels who yet doubting thy unthankful receipt niggardly keep them to their own use and private commodity, whereas being assured of the contrary by thy friendly report of other men's travails, they could perhaps be easily entreated more freely to lend them abroad to thy greater avail and futherance."

<sup>78</sup> Smith, i, 88.

of the critics of the lack of poetic patronage. In his eclogue on the contempt of poetry he complains that poetry has no place "in prince's palace," though, as E. K. explains in the gloss, poets have formerly always found honor "in the sight of princes and noblemen." This Spenser had "elsewhere [in *The English Poet*] more notably"<sup>79</sup> shown, doubtless with the hope of eliciting in England the desired patronage for poetic art. In his *Tears of the Muses* he likewise laments the state of affairs in which poetry no longer finds "entertainment or in court or school."

Their great revenues all in sumptuous pride  
They spend, that naught to learning they may spare;  
And the rich fee which poets wont divide  
Now parasites and sycophants do share.

In ages past poetry fared better.

Then was she held in sovereign dignity  
And made the nursling of nobility.  
But now nor prince nor priest doth her maintain . . . .  
One only lives, her age's ornament,  
And mirror of her Maker's majesty,  
That with rich bounty and dear cherishment  
Supports the praise of noble poesy.<sup>80</sup>

The One, Elizabeth, "is herself a peerless poetess." Only a "few"<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Works*, Globe ed., p. 479.

<sup>80</sup> *Ib.*, p. 503. Cp. Spenser's picture of unsuccessful suing at Court, *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, II. 892-909. Peele also expresses hope for poetry in the patronage of the Queen; cf. *The Honor of the Garter — Ad Maecenatem Prologus*."

For other patrons have our poets none,  
But Muses and the Graces to implore . . . .  
Unless in hope Augusta will restore  
The wrongs that learning bears of covetousness  
And Court's disdain, the enemy to art.

<sup>81</sup> One of these few was evidently the Countess of Pembroke, whom the critics hold up as a shining example of literary patronage. Nash eulogizes her as the "fair sister of Phoebus [Sidney] and eloquent secretary of the Muses . . . . whom arts do adore as the second Minerva, and our poets extol as the patroness of their invention" (Pref. *Astrophel and Stella*, Smith, ii, 225). Abraham Fraunce dedicated to her his *Arcadian Rhetoric* (1588); and Meres extols her as "learned Mary . . . . the noble sister of immortal Sir Philip Sidney . . . . very liberal unto poets; besides . . . . a most delicate poet" (*Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 321-2).

beside this sacred skill esteem." In verses prefixed to the *Faery Queen* Spenser again calls attention of the court to the fact that

The sacred Muses have made always claim  
To be the nurses of nobility,<sup>82</sup>—

and in seventeen sonnets addressed to the Queen and all the great lords and ladies of the court he bids hard for patronage, hoping to regain for poetry something of its former favor in the eyes of the great, for with these poetry ought to find grace, especially when its object is "to fashion a gentleman."

And yet, for all this, unregarding soil  
Unlac't the line of his desired life,  
Denying maintenance for his dear relief;  
Careless ere to prevent his exequy,  
Scarce deigning to shut up his dying eye.<sup>83</sup>

Sir Philip Sidney, who also deplores England's cold welcome to poetry, offers a pointed explanation for the reluctance of the best wits to appear in print, which may serve as a reason why he himself, though solicitous for the advancement of poetic art in England, did not publish any of his writings during his lifetime. "*Queis meliore luto finxit praeordia Titan*," he writes, quoting from Juvenal, "are better content to suppress the out-flowing of their wit, than by publishing them to be accounted knights of the same order."<sup>84</sup>

Webbe, at the beginning of his *Discourse of English Poetry*, complains of the neglect of poetry by learned men, and asks consideration for his book as "*an instar cedis* to stir up some other of meet ability to bestow travail in this matter." It is lamentable, he thinks, that whereas other kinds of learning have received ample attention from "men of great authority and judgment, only poetry hath found fewest friends to amend it, those that can reserving their skill to themselves." Just as eloquence has "found such favorers in the English tongue" that "she frequenteth not any more gladly, so would poetry, if there were the like welcome and entertainment given her by our English poets, without question aspire to wonderful perfection, and appear far more gorgeous and delectable among us." Webbe therefore exhorts the learned poets to "take compassion of noble poetry" and rescue it from mangling and deface-

<sup>82</sup> *Works*, Globe ed., p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Return from Parnassus* (1601), Pt. II, Act I, sc. ii.

<sup>84</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 195.

ment by "rude smatterers and barbarous imitators."<sup>85</sup> Welcoming Spenser's aid in advancing poetry and in discrediting the rabble, he regrets that he can find no other with whom to couple the new poet in his "rare gift," unless it be his friend Harvey, and in behalf of English poetry he is eager for the publication of Spenser's other works, especially his *English Poet*.<sup>86</sup>

In contrasting the conditions of his own day with those of ancient times, or even the time of Henry VIII, when poets prospered as "prince-pleasers," Puttenham complains that it is hard to find "a cunning poet, because we find few great princes much delighted in the same studies." He regrets that it has come to pass that "such among the nobility or gentry as be very well seen in many laudable sciences, and especially in making of poesy . . . have no courage to write, and, if they have, yet are they loath to be known of their skill"; and he knows "very many notable gentlemen in the court that have written commendably, and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be publisht without their own names to it."<sup>87</sup> The reasons why few gentlemen delight in the art are "the scorn and ordinary disgrace offered unto poets in these days," and the lack of liberality in princes, who, "for their largess" formerly accounted "the only patrons of learning," now seem to take no pleasure in poetry, and since by their "example the subject is commonly led,"<sup>88</sup> poetry suffers. Hope for the art, however, is to be found in the fact

<sup>85</sup> Smith, i, 227, 229.

<sup>86</sup> *Ib.*, 232, 245.

<sup>87</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 22. Their example was apparently followed by the author of this treatise. The handicap to poetry due to the aristocratic antipathy felt toward the vulgar and democratic institution of printing is indicated again and again. Drayton, "To the General Reader" of his *Polyolbion*, complains: "There is a great disadvantage against me, that it cometh out at this time when verses are wholly deduced to chambers, and nothing esteemed in this lunatic age but what is kept in cabinets and must pass by transcription." Donne "acknowledges it as a serious fault in himself 'to have descended to print anything in verse'" (E. Gosse, *Life of Donne*, i, 303). "It is ridiculous," says Seldon, "for a lord to print verses; 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish" (*Discourse of John Seldon, Esq.*, ed. S. H. Reynolds, p. 135). Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*, II, ii:

*Daw* . . . . You have of the wits that write verses, and yet are no poets: they are poets that live by it, the poor fellows that live by it.

*Daup.* Why, would you not live by your verses, Sir John?

*Cler.* No, 'twere pity he should. A knight live by his verses! he did not make them to that end, I hope . . . . He'll not hinder his own rising in the state so much.

<sup>88</sup> *Ib.*, 21-22.

that "in her Majesty's time" "another crew of courtly makers" has sprung up, "noblemen and gentlemen of her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well," though it is a pity that in behalf of poetry their writings have not been "found out and made public with the rest." Best of all, poetry is honored by the "learned, delicate, noble Muse" of "the Queen our Sovereign Lady";<sup>80</sup> and in his elation at this Puttenham himself is inspired to versify, though in less happy manner than that of Master Spenser.

And as some think, your highness takes delight  
Oft to peruse the styles of other men,  
And oft yourself, with Lady Sappho's pen,  
In sweet measures of poesy t'endite  
The rare effects of your heavenly sprite.<sup>80</sup>

The loss to poetry due to the non-participation of the finest wits is keenly deplored by Nash. "There are extant about London," he says, "many most able men to revive poetry."<sup>81</sup> But whereas the ignorant "endeavor continually to publish their folly," "those that are most exquisitely furnished with learning shroud themselves in obscurity." Poets of genius and ability are silent because of the absurdity and insolence of "rude rithmours" who, "as the basilisk with his hiss driveth all other serpents from the place of his abode," "with their jarring verse" alienate men from delight in poetry.<sup>82</sup> Nash's conviction that poetry has suffered from this alienation of the best wits is further evinced by his elation over the publication of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) by virtue of which he, like E. K. in case of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, defiantly cries down the hobgoblin rimesters who "lead men up and down in a circle of absurdity."<sup>83</sup>

In Nash's *Pierce Penniless*<sup>84</sup> (1592) there is much complaint of the neglect of poets. "But all in vain," laments Pierce, "I sat up late, and rose early, contended with the cold, and conversed with scarcity: for all my labors turned to loss, my vulgar muse was despised and neglected,

<sup>80</sup> *Ib.*, 63, 66.

<sup>81</sup> *Partheniades*, cf. Haslewood's ed. *Art of English Poesy*, p. xix.

<sup>82</sup> Pref. Greene's *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 319.

<sup>83</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 322, 328.

<sup>84</sup> Pref. *Astrophel and Stella*, Smith, ii, 224. The author of *Polimanteia* (1595) smiles to see the "smaller lights" "hide themselves at the Sun's appear," and is pleased to think that now the Muses shall not "be so busely handled by every rough swain."

<sup>85</sup> *Works*, McKerrow, i, 157 ff.

my pains not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I myself (in prime of my wit) laid open to poverty." He then paints forth his passion in verse, but

Without redress complains my careless verse,  
And Midas-ears relent not at my moan.

In England "skill is nothing worth" and a scrivener is "better paid for an obligation than a scholar for the best poem he can make." Then too Sir Philip Sidney has left too few successors of his glory in cherishing the sons of the Muses. There is not the "strict observation of honor, which hath been heretofore. Men of great calling take it of merit, to have their names eternized by poets; and whatsoever pamphlet or dedication encounters them, they put it up in their sleeves, and scarce give him thanks that presents it."<sup>96</sup> Such men not only give "nothing themselves, but impoverish liberality in others."<sup>96</sup>

The lack of patronage of poets is further set forth by Lodge in his *Fig for Momus*<sup>97</sup> (1595) in a long pastoral dialogue between Wagrin and Golde.

*Wagrin.*

Why sings not Golde as he whilom did  
In sacred numbers, and diviner vein,  
Such hymns, as from base-humor'd brains are hid? . . . .

*Golde.*

Can virtue spring that wanteth true regard?  
No Wagrin no: 'tis wisdom to refrain  
In such an age, where learning hath no laud . . . .

*Wagrin.*

Fie Golde, blame not all men for few,  
The Muses have some friends, who will esteem  
A man of worth, and give desert his due . . . .

<sup>96</sup> Cp. Hall (*Virgidemiarum*, Bk. V, 81):

. . . . Grand Mæcenas casts a glavering eye  
On the cold present of a poesy.

<sup>96</sup> But "far be it, bright stars of Nobility, and glistening attendants on the true Diana," writes Nash near the end, "that this my speech should be any way injurious to your glorious magnificence: for in you live those sparks of Augustan liberality, that never sent any away empty; and Science sevenfold throne, well nigh ruined by riot and avarice, is mightily supported by your plentiful largess, which makes poets to sing such goodly hymns of your praise, as no envious posterity may forget."

<sup>97</sup> Eclogue III, *Complete Works*, vol. iii, p. 23 ff. Cp. October eclogue, *Shepherd's Calendar*.

*Golde.*

Arts perish, wanting honor and applause . . . . .  
 The priest unpaid, can neither sing nor say:  
 Nor poets sweetly write, except they meet  
 With sound rewards, for sermoning so sweet . . . . .

In his *Wits Misery*<sup>98</sup> Lodge extols the "divine wits," Lyly, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, and Nash, and exhorts them as "unnamed professors, or friends of poetry," to knit their "industries in private," to unite their "fames in public: let the strong stay up the weak, and the weak march under conduct of the strong; and all to imbattle" themselves in the virtuous cause of poetry.

The fastidious aloofness of those who would differentiate themselves from the despised versifiers is exemplified in Gabriel Harvey, who, affecting supreme contempt for the "scribbling rascality," is pompously indignant at the surreptitious publication of some of his "extemporal"<sup>99</sup> verses, which he fears might expose him to the possibility of being associated with the Eldertonian riff-raff with whom he attempts to class Nash.<sup>100</sup> Sir John Harington, disdaining Puttenham's imputation that a translator is but a versifier, apparently considers himself sufficiently separated from the ordinary rimester by the character of his work, though some of his friends, taking the attitude complained of by Puttenham, had "misliked" his participation in poetry.<sup>101</sup>

Francis Meres, voicing the elegant attitude of the time in his quotation from Lyly, "To the Gentlemen Readers" of *Euphues*, that "books be stale when they be printed, in that they be common,"<sup>102</sup> lauds the sovereigns of England and Scotland as poets and patrons of poetry, though, in contrasting conditions of his own day with the times of bountiful patronage in Greece and Rome, he deplores the lack of an Augustus, Octavia, or Mæcenus to "reward and countenance" poets and utters imprecations against his own "ingrateful and damned age," because "for lack of patrons" it allows its poets to be "solely or chiefly main-

<sup>98</sup> *Works*, vol. iv, p. 57.

<sup>99</sup> *Letter-Book* Smith, i, 125.

<sup>100</sup> *Pierce's Supererogation*, Smith, ii, 261.

<sup>101</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 196, 219.

<sup>102</sup> *Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 308.

tained, countenanced, and patronized" by means of comedians and tragedians.<sup>103</sup>

The want of patronage for poetry is also deplored by Richard Barnfield, who in his poem entitled *The Complaint of Poetry for the Death of Liberality*<sup>104</sup> (1598) avers that bounty is dead and complains strongly against the avarice that denies patronage. William Warner versifies facetiously of poets who take their melancholy walks in threadbare coats, even nods to them being

largess and but lost;

For Pallas' hermits live secure, obscure in roofs embost.<sup>105</sup>

Samuel Daniel notes the unfavorable state of literary patronage in his declaration, upon the accession of James I, that the times "promise a more regard to the present condition of our writings, in respect to our Sovereign's happy inclination this way," whereby expecting encouragement for poetry in its existing course of development he is encouraged "under the patronage of a noble earl" to put forth his book.<sup>106</sup> In verses to J. Florio, however, in 1611, Daniel complains:

Would they but be pleased to know how small  
A portion of that overflowing waste  
Which runs from them, would turn the wheels, and all  
The frame of wit, to make their glory last,  
I think they would do something; but the stir  
Still about greatness, gives it not the space  
To look out from itself, or to confer  
Grace but by chance, and as men are in place.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Ib.*, 313. "Poetry, in this latter age", says Ben Jonson (*Discoveries*, p. 22), "hath proved but a mean mistress to such as have wholly addicted themselves to her, or given their names up to her family."

<sup>104</sup> *Complete Poems*, ed. Grosart.

<sup>105</sup> *Heliconia*, iii, 287. The indigence of poets due to lack of patronage is satirically portrayed in the *Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1600).

<sup>106</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 357.

<sup>107</sup> Verses prefixed to *Queen Anne's New World of Words*. Daniel, who had less cause for complaint than most of the poets of his day, expresses a lofty and courageous attitude in *Musophilus* (1599). No matter if men

Neglect, distaste, uncomprehend, disdain.

No public neglect, says he, can destroy

The love I bear unto this holy skill.  
This is the thing that I was born to do,  
This is my scene, this part must I fulfill.

The view that poetry in the age of Elizabeth suffered from lack of recognition and reward by wealthy and noble patrons, though partially derived by the critics from their academic contemplations of illustrious examples of literary patronage among the ancients, whom they held up for emulation, was not merely an academic speculation; for those that complained most bitterly were men like Spenser, who were affected most keenly by the neglect. Reluctantly hazarding their dignity and social esteem by publishing the "outflowing of their wit" at all, they found it bitterly humiliating to do so without receiving the recognition that would distinguish them from "knights of a lower order," namely, the rabble of poet-apes. Thus it was deemed by the critics that poetry was seriously hampered by the failure of those in high place to grant encouragement and adequate reward to those who had the talent to elevate the art and become its fitting representatives.

The handicap to poetry by the refusal of men of highest rank and talent to participate in it, or at least to publish their writings, was so keenly felt by the critics that when they considered a champion had entered the field their joy was great, and high their laudation. By this patriotic laudation and by exhortations to publish further, the best and noblest wits were encouraged and pressed to enlist in the cause of poetry. Further stimulus was afforded by the idea promulgated in such books as Castiglione's *Courtier* that a courtier should be a man of letters. Still the critics complained that to the detriment of the art of poetry gentle and cultured men had "no courage to write," or were "loath to be known of their skill." The aristocracy of culture could not be persuaded, even for the protection of the noble heritage of poetic art, to stoop to a contest with vulgar inferiors. That democratic institution the printing press was forcing the literary life of the age to face a most perplexing problem, for through its instrumentality poetry was being degraded and only through its instrumentality could poetry be saved and given force in the nation. Nicholas Ling, among others, attempts in behalf of poetry to overcome the aristocratic objections to publication, declaring that if men, in prizing their birth or fortune, should scorn to be placed beside meaner men, they should remember that wits are placed side by side, not men nor classes, and further that poets' names have in highest judgments been associated with the "names of the greatest princes of the world."<sup>108</sup> The critics felt keenly the need of men of letters possessing

<sup>108</sup> Nicholas Ling, "To the Reader, if Indifferent," *England's Helicon*, ed., Bullen, p. 5.

the spirit of Ben Jonson, writers who would freely publish the fruits of their genius and fight out the battle against the rabble of poetasters.

Critical opinion with respect to the welfare of poetry may now be briefly summed up. With an awakened interest and an advancing standard of excellence, the critics considered the state of poetry eminently unsatisfactory, the art being degraded and discredited. Puritanism was not regarded as a serious menace to non-dramatic poetry. The welfare of poetry, it was deemed, was threatened chiefly by the participation of men whose work debased and disgraced the art. A further source of evil was found in an indiscriminating multitude of readers whose uncultured taste fostered low ideals and inferior work. In consequence of these conditions and on account of inadequate recognition and reward of real poets by wealthy and noble patrons, men of highest standing and ability were reluctant to employ their talent toward the desired advancement and elevation of poetic art. In the view of the critics, poetry was indeed severely handicapped.

The struggle for poetry, as it is reflected in the critical writings of the period, instead of having been chiefly a conflict between ethical ideals and esthetic ideals, a conflict against puritanism, seems rather to have been chiefly a conflict between the demoralizing practice of a rabble of versifiers fostered by the bad taste of the people, and the advancing critical standard of men of culture and poetic talent, the main concern of the latter being to check the abuses of the art and at the same time to labor for its perfection. In other words, the conflict during the reign of Elizabeth was less on ethical and religious grounds than on social and esthetic grounds. The critics and men of letters without exception evidently directed their energies not against what Sir John Harington calls the "very weak faction" "that condemn all poetry," but against the "ravenous rabble" that "pitifully mangled and defaced" it.

### III. REMEDIES

#### 1. *Improve—Honor the Science*

The attitude that prompted the critics to animadvert on the causes of the unsatisfactory state of poetry led them likewise to cast about for remedies. The critical discrimination that gave rise to dissatisfaction with existing conditions bred desire for change and improvement; and, instead of being discouraged at the outlook, the critics were imbued with an optimistic, militant spirit of reform and uplift, with forward-

looking thoughts, confident that faults could be amended, abuses corrected, and poetry saved and elevated to a station worthy of its essentially high and noble nature. With an increasing number able "to discern between good writers and bad,"<sup>1</sup> between poets and versifiers, the watchword came to be, "correct the abuse, honor the science."<sup>2</sup>

Remedies of course were suggested to the critics, as has already been noticed, by the very conditions that were deemed detrimental. Poetry being abused and disgraced, the abuses should be corrected, the enormities wiped out. The "rakehell rout" must be discredited and silenced, and so far as possible the bad taste of the "uncapable multitude" reformed and improved. The talent of the "best wits" must be attracted to poetry and encouraged by adequate patronage. In short, poetic art must be wrested from the perversions of the ignorant and vulgar and put into the hands of scholars and gentlemen, more worthy ideals and a higher standard must be made to prevail, the whole spirit and conception of poetry must be exalted, its importance magnified, and the art, reinvested with something of its ancient mystery, conserved for the highest uses.

Manifestations of this positive, upward critical attitude begin early and may be noted throughout the period. Dissatisfaction with existing standards in England and desire for improvement were evidently bred by the growing acquaintance with foreign literature. The Latin poets, Elyot asserts in the *Governor*<sup>3</sup> (1531), express themselves "incomparably with more grace and delectation to the reader than our English tongue may yet comprehend." Ascham in his preface to *Toxophilus* (1545) puts the case still more strongly: "And as for the Latin or Greek tongue, everything is so excellently done in them that none can do better: in the English tongue contrary, everything in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse." Even such celebrities as Hawes and Skelton were painfully conscious of inferiority and frequently apologized for their rude diction and lack of poetic power. The spirit of advancement was not confined to classical devotees, and an interesting example of the combination of crudeness and aspiration for the improvement of English poetry occurs in such verses as the following by an early balladist.

<sup>1</sup> Webbe, Smith, i, 227.

<sup>2</sup> Lodge, Smith, i, 78.

<sup>3</sup> Jos. Lilly's *Black Letter Ballads*, pp. 207-8.

All them that will address  
 Their pen to metres, let them not spare  
 To follow Chaucer, a man very rare,  
 Lydgate, Wager, Barclay and Bale,  
 With many other that excellent are,  
 In these our days, extant to sale.  
 Let writers not covet the bottom or dale,  
 If they may come to the hill or brink.<sup>4</sup>

Tottel in putting forth his *Miscellany* exhorts his readers to educate themselves to an appreciation of the elevated standard represented in his book, and editors of later miscellanies evince similar aims for the advancement of poetry. Golding and Phaer as early translators are enthusiastic to "enrich our tongue"<sup>5</sup> and increase the poetic possibilities of English speech. A similar spirit is shown by Turbervile, whose "chief characteristic is his deliberate attempt to polish and harmonize the language,"<sup>6</sup> and who warmly praises Surrey in that

Our tongue by him hath got such light  
 As ruder speech thereby is banished quite.<sup>7</sup>

Ascham aims at the improvement of poetry in his earnest appeal in the *Schoolmaster* for more intelligent and discriminating imitation of classical models; and Stanyhurst shows a well-intentioned zeal to follow "Master Ascham's will" by applying his wit "in beautifying our English language with heroical verses," thereby hoping "to advance the riches of our speech."<sup>8</sup>

The high ideals of Spenser—whose genius covered "the movement developed by the Euphuists for the refinement of the national language"<sup>9</sup> and who seems consciously to have labored to improve poetic taste<sup>10</sup>—are best shown by his actual performance. In a letter to Harvey, however, he expresses his exacting sense of a high standard in his fear lest the refined taste of "his excellent Lordship" (Sidney?) might be

<sup>4</sup> Bk. I, chap. xiii, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Golding, Epistle to Robert, Earl of Leicester (Transl. Ovid). Cf. Phaer, Warton's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iv, 221.

<sup>6</sup> Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 158.

<sup>7</sup> Chalmers' *English Poets*, ii, 588.

<sup>8</sup> Ded. *Aeneid*, Smith, i, 137, 138.

<sup>9</sup> Courthope, *op. cit.*, ii, 234.

<sup>10</sup> Courthope, *Cambridge History*, iii, 276.

shocked at the baseness of his *Shepherd's Calendar*; and later in introducing his *Faery Queen* to the elegant readers of the Court he deprecates the rudeness and savageness of his production. E. K., however, appreciative of the delicate beauties of the former work and eager that poetic taste may be promoted by due recognition of them, takes pains to point out excellencies that otherwise might escape the "unskillful reader." He is also solicitous to have others "labor to garnish and beautify"<sup>11</sup> English poetic style.

Sidney, whose impelling motive in his *Apology* is with reference to establishing more worthy ideals and better practice in poetry, likewise desires to arouse ambition "to beautify our mother tongue,"<sup>12</sup> and with Horace<sup>13</sup> he condemns mediocrity in poets. In this treatise, as well as in his poems, he labors ardently to exalt the whole conception of poetry, evidently deeming that better ideals as to the nature and function of the art must prevail before it could take its true position in the national life.

With a much narrower view but no less zeal, Webbe—placing his hope for improvement largely in classical versification—exhorts the "learned laureate masters of England" to wipe out the enormities of English poetry and to win credit for their native speech, confident that if such men would set "their helping hands to poetry" they would "much beautify and adorn it." With faith in the "meetness of our speech to receive the best form of poetry" and trusting that it might gradually "be brought to the very majesty of a right heroical verse," he is eager to enlist poets in labor that would "adorn their country and advance their style with the highest and most learnedest top of true poetry."<sup>14</sup> Ambitious for elevation of poetry, such as has been gained for prose by the eloquence of Euphuism, he avers that the aim of his work is to stir up such interest that the improvement of poetry may be "taken in hand" by some of "the famous poets of London" in order that the art may be put "at a higher price" and "the rabble of bald rimes . . . . turned to famous works."<sup>15</sup>

Puttenham, interested like the rest in asserting the dignity and importance of poetry, declares that it "ought not to be abased and

<sup>11</sup> Ded. *Shepherd's Calendar*.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, i, 152.

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 228, 229, 246.

<sup>15</sup> *Ib.*, 301. Gabriel Harvey in 1592 thinks that he perceives—not in himself, but in a few others—"the grounded and winged hope, which . . . . is the ascending scale and milk-way to heavenly excellency" (Smith, ii, 284).

employed upon any unworthy matter and subject."<sup>16</sup> He seeks to promote the art by holding up for honor and emulation poets who by "their thankful studies" have "so much beautified our English tongue," extolling among others Wyatt and Surrey as "the first reformers of our English metre and style" and commending their services in polishing "our rude homely manner of vulgar poesy from that it had been before."<sup>17</sup> This method of gaining credit for poetry by praising its exemplars, commonly employed by the critics, is also used by Harvey, who, evidently in earnest in his desire to promote and uplift the art, holds up for emulation "noble Sir Philip Sidney and gentle Master Spenser" and presumes "affectionately" to thank these and other sons of the Muses "for their studious endeavors, commendably employed in enriching and polishing their native tongue."<sup>18</sup> Thomas Churchyard, in seventeen pages of verses on *A Praise of Poetry*<sup>19</sup> (1595), also adds his voice in an attempt to serve the cause of poetry, which in Harvey's opinion he helped to degrade.

Although Samuel Daniel, writing at the end of the reign of Elizabeth with a feeling as to the security of poetry lacking in earlier critics, is for "plodding on the plain tract . . . . beaten by custom and the time," deeming that we shall best "tend to perfection" "by going on in the course we are in"; yet he earnestly desires improvement, and urges the poets of his time not to be discouraged by an attack such as Campion's (against rime), but rather to be animated by the opposition "to bring up all the best of their powers" and to strive "with all the strength of nature and industry"<sup>20</sup> to lift poetry above reproach and make it a source of national pride and welfare.

The desire of the critics for the improvement of poetry,<sup>21</sup> arising from a growing ability to discriminate between good and bad and centering

<sup>16</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 24. Cp. Shakespeare, Sonnet 100:

Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,  
Dark'ning thy power to lend base subjects light?  
Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem  
In gentle numbers time so idly spent.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 62-63.

<sup>18</sup> *Four Letters* (1592), Smith, ii, 234.

<sup>19</sup> *Censura Lit.*, Brydges, i, 295.

<sup>20</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 373-4, 380.

<sup>21</sup> The idea of the inevitable progress of poetry, which at the end of the century had ground in accomplishment as well as in aspiration, is reflected in the thought of the great master poet of the time (Sonnet XXXII):

in a determination to discredit inferiority and elevate the poetic standard, manifested itself, as has been seen, in various ways. Even in the mere perception of detrimental conditions lay hope of betterment, for defects and abuses being apprehended they might be corrected. In seeking to bring about the improvement of poetry, therefore, the critics employed their energies upon various remedies. They labored to exalt the whole conception of poetry, condemning all that they considered low, crude, and inferior, and extolling all that they considered high, refined, and excellent. They used all possible means to discredit the abusers of the art and to honor those who graced it. Turning their backs upon barbarism, they encouraged the endeavors of poets to polish, refine, and beautify poetic language and style. They insisted upon the necessity of imitating the best models native or foreign, for the most part, however, advocating the imitation of the masterpieces of the Greeks and Romans, some in their zeal proposing to impose upon English poetry the classical metres, a strong motive here being the desire not only to refine the art but to put it out of reach of ignorant practitioners. Further remedies that receive special attention from the critics—and to be dealt with in pages following—were the appeal to patriotism, the conservation of poetry by restricting it to the domains of learning and circles of social distinction, and the attempt to advance the art by furnishing its more worthy representatives with the best possible instruction. In all this the critics were animated by an earnest desire to lift English poetry above mediocrity and attain for it the highest possible standard of excellence, to find the ways that “tend to perfection.”

## 2. *The Appeal to Patriotism*

In their endeavors to remedy unfavorable conditions and uplift English poetry, the critics constantly appealed to national pride—a

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These poor rude lines of they deceased lover,  
 Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,  
 And though they be outstripp'd by every pen,  
 Reserve them for my love, not for their rime,  
 Exceeded by the height of happier men.  
 O, then vouchsafe me but this loving thought:  
 “Had my friends Muse grown with this growing age,  
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought,  
 To march in ranks of better equipage;  
 But since he died and poets better prove,  
 Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.”

strong force in Elizabethan times and abundantly manifested in creative literature as well as in criticism. The growing national consciousness that aroused concern for England's standing in poetry bred a desire to emulate and surpass the poetic art of other nations. Inferiority was intolerable and oftentimes patriotic zeal impelled the critics to close their eyes to "barbarism" and the "ragged rout" of English rimers and vaunt the superior excellence of English poets, though at other times they were quite as zealously patriotic in crying down the rabble of versifiers whom they considered a disgrace to the nation. Indeed the critics, in their attempts to enlist able representatives in the cause of poetry, were prompted by the twofold motive of emulating and overgoing foreign rivals and silencing the poet-apes at home.

This motive of arousing patriotism in behalf of English poetry appears at the very beginning of the period in Tottel's introduction to his *Miscellany*, in which the dominant idea is "the honor of the English tongue," with faith that "our tongue is able in that kind to do as praiseworthy as the rest."<sup>22</sup> Ascham—whose interest in the practical values of "imitation" affords wholesome lessons for modern source hunters likewise is eager that England should emulate the literary achievements of Italy and the ancients;<sup>23</sup> and in *Toxophilus* he loyally writes "English matter in the English tongue for English men." Gascoigne follows Ascham in defending his mother tongue against undesirable foreign influences and advocates monosyllables on the ground that "the more monosyllables that you use the truer Englishman you shall seem."<sup>24</sup> E. K. is also loyal on the point of diction, praising Spenser for laboring to restore to their rightful heritage good old English words, and objecting to the attempts of others to patch up English with the "pieces and rags of other languages."<sup>25</sup> One of his reasons for adding his gloss to the *Shepherd's Calendar* is to compete with "the learned of other nations." Spenser himself, though skillfully and elusively, everywhere following Italian and French authors, as E. K. proudly acknowledges, manifests throughout a spirit of patriotic aspiration, and

<sup>22</sup> Saintsbury says of an earlier period, "Hawes and his generation were not altogether uncritically endeavoring at what was 'important to *them*'—the strengthening and enriching, namely, of English vocabulary, and extension of English literary practice and stock" (*Hist. Crit.* ii, 147).

<sup>23</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 34, 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Notes of Instruction*, Smith, i, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, i, 129-30.

particularly when in his letter to Harvey he "flatly professed" his ambition to "overgo"<sup>26</sup> Ariosto.

Harvey notably evinces the jealous ambition of English men of letters to emulate and surpass the other nations of Europe. Italy, Spain, and France, he declares, are ravished with the "glorious and ambitious desire to set out and advance their own languages above the very Greek and Latin, if it were possible." Glorifying in their "exquisite forms of speech, carrying a certain brave, magnificent grace and majesty," they repose a "great part of their sovereign glory and reputation abroad in the world in the famous writings of their noblest wits." It has "universally been the practice," continues Harvey, of the most flourishing and politic states "to make the very most of their vulgar tongues," and "by all means possible to amplify and enlarge them, devising all ordinary and extraordinary helps, both for the polishing and refining them at home, and also for the spreading and dispersing of them abroad."<sup>27</sup> Englishmen were now participating in this spirit. "Who can tell," asks Harvey enthusiastically, supposing the existence of the proper spirit of emulation, "what comparison this tongue might wage with the most flourishing languages of Europe?"<sup>28</sup> England may exult

<sup>26</sup> Smith, i, 116. Cp. Hall, *Satires*, Bk. I, Satire IV:

Renowned Spenser: whom no earthly wight  
Dares once to emulate, much less despite.  
Salust of France, and Tuscan Ariost  
Yield up the laurel garland ye have lost.

And *Polimanteia* (ed. Grosart, p. 44): "Let other countries (sweet Cambridge) envy (yet admire) my Virgil, thy Petrarch, divine Spenser." The motive of patriotic pride is also shown in Meres' "Comparative Discourse of our English Poets with the Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets."

<sup>27</sup> *Letter Book*, ed. E. J. L. Scott, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, ii, 282, 283. An interesting suggestion comes from Sir Philip Sidney, the courtier-soldier, to the effect that war might afford the desired stimulus for poetry in England: "For heretofore poets have in England also flourished; and, which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of Mars did sound loudest. And now . . . an over-faint quietness should seem to strew the house for poets . . . Truly even that, as of the one side it giveth great praise to poesy, which like Venus (but to better purpose) had rather be troubled in the net with Mars than enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan; so serves it for a piece of a reason why they are less grateful to idle England" (*Apology*, Smith, i, 194). The idea is also expressed by Spenser. In reply to Piers' suggestion (*Shepherd's Calendar*, October Eclogue) to "sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts," Cuddie complains that

all the worthies liggén wrapt in lead,  
That matter made for poets on to play.

in her "English Ariosto," but she should be ill-content without her Tasso and her Du Bartas.

Patriotic motives are frequently avowed by translators and linguists, Golding, Phaer, and Stanyhurst all asserting such aims as that of the last named in his translation of Virgil, "for the honor of the English."<sup>29</sup> Richard Mulcaster—who as Spenser's old teacher possibly influenced the latter's ideas on diction—emphasizing his entire faith in the mother tongue, declares loyally, "I favor Italy, but England more, I honor the Latin, but I worship the English,"<sup>30</sup>—and again, "Why not everything in English?"<sup>31</sup> A stanza by Arthur Golding, "which was prefixed to a dictionary near the middle of the reign of Elizabeth," expresses like loyalty and ambition for the English language:

No doubt but men shall shortly find there is  
As perfect order, as firm certainty,  
As ground rules to try out things amiss,  
As much sweet grace, as great variety  
Of words and phrases, as good quality  
For verse or prose in English every way  
As any common language hath this day.<sup>32</sup>

Webbe, encouraging and holding up for emulation efforts for the honor of English poetry, warmly commends "Master Arthur Golding, for his labor in Englishing Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and for being "addicted," with "infinite pains" and "without society," "to profit this nation and speech." He also praises Phaer for his laudable work in translating Virgil and thinks that he deserves equal commendation with Golding in his efforts "for the beautifying of the English speech."<sup>33</sup> To Spenser he gives enthusiastic commendation for his honor to English

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"Mighty manhood" on a "bed of ease" affords no inspiration. Further, Clio in *Tears of the Muses* deplores the dearth of "noble feats" and laments that there is "nothing worthy to be writ", while Calliope grieves that there is naught upon which to exercise her "heroic style", because men have "desire of worthy deeds forlorne." Cp. Shakespeare: "Learning and good letters, peace hath tutor'd" (II *Henry IV*, IV, i, 44); "Peace, dear nurse of arts" (*Henry V*, V, ii, 35); "This peace is nothing but to . . . breed ballad-makers" (*Coriolanus*, IV, V, 235).

<sup>29</sup> Ded. *Aeneid*, Smith, i, 138.

<sup>30</sup> *Elementary* (1582); cf. Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 164.

<sup>31</sup> Jusserand's *Lit. Hist.*, ii, 360.

<sup>32</sup> *Poetical Decameron*, J. P. Collier, i, xxii.

<sup>33</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 243, 262.

poetry in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, concluding that, were it not for "the coarseness of our speech," the English poet might have equalled or possibly surpassed Theocritus or Virgil, and regretting that his other works are not "common abroad," for if they were he has faith that English poets might be matched with the best.<sup>34</sup> With this ambition at heart he exhorts the laureate masters of England to "consult . . . . with their heavenly Muse what credit they might win to their native speech," being persuaded that, had their energies been exerted in the right direction, English poetry "would long ere this have aspired to as full perfection as in any other tongue whatsoever," and that it is possible for English poets so to enlarge "the credit of their native speech" that its "poetry should not stoop to the best of them all." Most of all, he desires that the poets might so "adorn their country" as to overcome the "reproach of barbarousness."<sup>35</sup> In fact Webbe avows that the chief purpose of his discourse is to gain for poetry such interest and support as to turn "the rabble of bald rimes" to famous works, "comparable . . . . with the best works of poetry in other tongues."<sup>36</sup>

The critics, it is evident, though keenly conscious of the more sinister aspect of English poetry, when touched by patriotic emulation are quick to turn the picture and make the best of what they have. Nash, for instance, in refuting "our English Italians," who say that "the finest wits our climate sends forth are but dry-brained dolts, in comparison of other countries," is sure that Chaucer, Lydgate, and Gower "have vaunted their metres with as much admiration in English as ever the proudest Ariosto did his verse in Italian."<sup>37</sup> He thinks that if Phaer's heavenly muse had "not been blemisht by his haughty thoughts, England might long have insulted in his wit"; and, coming to "our Court," he deems that "the otherwhile vacations of our graver nobility are prodigal of more pompous wit and choice of words than ever tragic Tasso could attain to." With chivalric ardor he is ready, "should the challenge of deep conceit be intruded by a foreigner to bring our English wits to the touchstone of art," to "prefer divine Master Spenser, the miracle of wit, to bandy line for line for my life in honor of England,

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, 232, 263.

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, 228, 229, 278, 279.

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*, 301.

<sup>37</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 318.

gainst Spain, France, Italy, and all the world."<sup>38</sup> In his *Anatomy of Absurdity*, however, Nash presents the darker side, and, still filled with patriotic fervor, indignantly denounces the "babbling ballets, and our new found songs and sonnets, which every red-nose fiddler hath at his fingers' end, and every ignorant ale knight will breathe forth over the pot, as soon as his brain waxeth hot." And now with concern for the poetic reputation of his nation he continues, "Were it that the infamy of their ignorance did redound only upon themselves, I could be content to apply my speech otherwise than to their Apuleyan ears; but sith they obtain the name of our English poets, and thereby make men think more basely of the wits of our country, I cannot but turn them out of their counterfeit livery and brand them in the forehead that all men may know their falsehood."<sup>39</sup>

The work of Puttenham in behalf of poetry is inspired largely by motives of patriotism, one of the main purposes of his treatise being to inculcate the ambitious idea that "there may be an art of our English poesy, as well as there is of the Latin and Greek." Moreover, he is one of the first writers of the age to avow something of national pride in rime, which, as an English asset possessing "instinct of nature" and great antiquity, he is inclined to measure against the "artificial" of the Greeks and Romans.<sup>40</sup> Puttenham also gives space to "the most commended writers in our English poesy" to the intent that they shall not be defrauded of honor due them "for having by their thankful studies so much beautified our English tongue" and so elevated poetry that it may compare with that of most other nations and possibly surpass that of some of them.<sup>41</sup>

The attempts to stimulate exertions toward excellence in English poetry by appeals to national pride gradually give way in the latter part of the century to expressions of the feeling that the desired goal has been attained. The "negligent persuasion of an impossibility in matching the best," of which Webbe complained,<sup>42</sup> is frequently superseded by the

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*, 315, 318. To those who demand wherein poets "are able to prove themselves necessary to the state," says Nash in *Pierce Penniless* (*Works*, McKerrow, i, 193), "thus I answer. First and foremost, they have cleansed our language from barbarism and made the vulgar sort here in London . . . to aspire to a richer purity of speech, than is communicated with the commonalty of any nation under heaven."

<sup>39</sup> Smith, i, 326, 327.

<sup>40</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 5, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ib.*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 228.

conclusion expressed by Carew in his *Epistle on the Excellency of the English Tongue* (1595?) that "we are within compass of a fore imagined impossibility."<sup>43</sup>

Chapman, who like previous translators regards his labor as an attempt to honor the mother tongue, promises "in the next edition" of his Homer "demonstrative proof of our English wits above beyond sea muses,"<sup>44</sup> the English language being for the translation of the Greek "more comformable, fluent, and expressive" than Italian, French, or Spanish. "Our quidditital Italianists," he declares in disdain, "shall never do Homer so much right, in any octaves, canzonets, or whatsoever fustian epigraphs they shall entitle their measures."<sup>45</sup> Campion, though less confident than Chapman, has similar aspirations. "What honor were it then," he exclaims, "for our English language to be the first that after so many years of barbarism could second the perfection of the industrious Greeks and Romans!"<sup>46</sup>

Daniel, opposing Campion in the rime controversy, finds in rime a ground for national pride, and reprehends Campion for having done "wrong to England, in seeking to lay reproach upon her native ornaments."<sup>47</sup> The whole spirit of Daniel's "Defense" breathes loyalty to this native poetry; and a large portion of his own poetical writing, it may be noted, is inspired by love of country. Although he is less narrowly prejudiced against foreigners than most of the earlier critics, he is as ardent as any for the renown of English poetry, and with enthusiasm looks forward to the time when "great Sidney and our Spenser" will be regarded as the equals of the Italian poets. In the dedication of his

<sup>43</sup> Smith, ii, 292. Ben Jonson compiled an English grammar to "shew the copy of it and matchableness with other tongues."

<sup>44</sup> Pref. *Iliad*, Smith, ii, 297. He puts the same idea into verses prefixed, "To the Reader":

And for our tongue that still is so impair'd  
By traveling linguists, I can prove it clear,  
That no tongue hath the muses utterance heir'd  
For verse, and that sweet music to the ear  
Strook out of rime, so naturally as this.

<sup>45</sup> *Ib.*, 300, 306-7.

<sup>46</sup> *Observations*, Smith, ii, 332. A fact too little recognized by scholars is noted by Upham (*French Influence in Elizabethan Literature*, pp. 36, 38), namely, that study and experimentation in classical verse forms had an end "far more vital . . . than the measuring of English quantities"; "the real impulse prompting to such study . . . was a national and patriotic one."

<sup>47</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 379.

*Cleopatra* to the Countess of Pembroke he writes, with a patriotic fervor befitting one of these great ones:

O that the ocean did not bound our style  
 Within these strict and narrow limits so:  
 But that the melody of our sweet Isle  
 Might now be heard to Tiber, Arne, and Po:  
 That they might know how far Thames doth outgo  
 The music of declined Italy!<sup>48</sup>

Zealous for the honor of England he writes with prophetic vision in *Musophilus*:

Should we this ornament of glory then,  
 As th' unmaterial fruits of shades neglect?  
 Or should we careless come behind the rest  
 In powers of words that go before in worth,  
 Whereas our accents, equal to the best,  
 Is able greater wonders to bring forth,  
 When all that ever hotter spirits exprest  
 Comes bettered by the patience of the North.  
 And who in time knows whither we may vent  
 The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores  
 This gain of our best glory shall be sent,  
 T' enrich unknowing nations with our stores?

All this vaunting of English poets and poetry, in which due allowance must be made for Elizabethan self-sufficiency and braggadocio, may not seem wholly in accord with the insistent complaints of the critics as to the unhappy state of poetry in England due to its degradation by rimesters and the neglect of better poets. The apparent inconsistency, however, is reconciled by the fact that patriotic declarations of the superiority of English poetry in a number of instances, as in case of Nash and Webbe,

<sup>48</sup> *Works*, iii, 26. Drayton (*England's Heroical Epistles*) makes Surrey say:

Though to the Tuscan I the smoothness grant,  
 Our dialect no majesty doth want,  
 To set thy praises in as high a key,  
 As France, or Spain, or Germany, or they.

Cp. Ben Jonson, "To Shakespeare" (ll. 38-42):

Leave thee alone for the comparison  
 Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome  
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.  
 Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,  
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

are accompanied by complaints that after all the art in England is disgraced before the world by those who do not deserve the name of poets. Impelled by love of country and love of art, the critics insist that the poet-apes who disgrace and humiliate the nation must be silenced and more worthy representatives put forward.<sup>49</sup> To this end emulation is stimulated and all honor and praise are given to those whose work tends to bring credit upon the mother tongue and satisfy national pride. Thus the appeal to patriotism, directed not to the groundlings but to the elite of literature, was employed as a means of remedying unsatisfactory conditions and enabling England to lift up her head among the nations as an equal in the noble art of poetry.

### 3. Poetry and Learning

The salvation of poetry, the critics deemed, lay in the hands of a chosen few. The art being threatened by the perversions of the ignorant and base, its preservation was to be attained by restricting it to the domains of learning and social distinction. The critical conception of poetry as a branch of learning<sup>50</sup> and essentially erudite separated it by an impassible barrier from all that smacked of ignorance or barbarism. Poetry therefore must be upheld as a learned art and its mysteries hedged in from the despoiling ravages of ignorance.

The idea promulgated by Caxton at the beginning of printing that such work as the noble product of Virgil's muse was "not for every rude and un cunning man," but "only for a clerk and a noble gentleman,"<sup>51</sup> was also the idea held by the critics of the reign of Elizabeth. Tottel expresses it in the preface to his *Miscellany*. He probably did not anticipate large financial returns from a popular audience, but at any rate

<sup>49</sup> A generation later the complaint is still made by Milton that hitherto "England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskillful handling of monks and mechanics," and so in a spirit that would have delighted the earlier critics he applied himself "to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue . . . to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother-dialect" (*Reason of Church Govt.*, Bk. II, Intro.). Ben Jonson in his dedication of *Volpone* to the "two famous universities" manifests a similar spirit.

<sup>50</sup> Bacon's "view is that poetry is just a part of learning licensed in imagination," the view which "all Elizabethan critics adopted" (Saintsbury, *Hist. Crit.*, ii, 194). His well-known divisions of learning (in *The advancement of Learning*) are history, poetry, and philosophy, and he refers to poetry as "a part of learning", "one of the principal portions of learning."

<sup>51</sup> Prol. *Aeneid* (*Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, A. W. Pollard, pp. 240-241)

he does not hesitate to reprehend the "swinelike grossness" of such, and commending the "stateliness of style" of his authors, "removed from the rude skill of common ears," he asks the "help of the learned to defend their learned friends."

Ascham as a devotee to classical culture is still more exacting. Delighted with the scholarly fastidiousness of his friend Watson, whose "care of perfection" in poetic practice he holds up as an "example to posterity" of diligence in learning, he regrets that Chaucer, Wyatt, and Surrey, not having followed the best classical examples, cannot be ranked higher "amongst men of learning and skill," and further concludes that the unhappy English predilection for the barbarism of rime is due chiefly to "lack of knowledge what is best."<sup>52</sup> He deplores conditions in which men would rather please the "humor of a rude multitude" than "satisfy the judgment of one learned"; and reproaching the presumption of writers who "daily in setting out books and ballets make great show of blossoms and buds, in whom is neither root of learning nor fruit of wisdom at all," he looks forward to the time when a proper sense of their lack of learning will deter such "rash ignorant heads" from stuffing the bookstalls with their rude rimes.<sup>53</sup> In accord with Ascham's scholarly ideals of poetry are some of the professions of Gascoigne, who announces himself in the Epistle to his *Posies* (1575) as a poet who esteems "more the praise of one learned reader" than he regards "the curious carping of ten thousand unlettered tattlers."<sup>54</sup> And in accordance with this his *A Hundreth Sundry Flowers* is advertised in the title as "both pleasant and profitable to the well-smelling noses of learned

<sup>52</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 24, 30, 32.

<sup>53</sup> *Ib.*, 31. "Verily there may no man be an excellent poet nor orator," writes Elyot (*Governor*, Bk. I, chap. xxiii, p. 131), "unless he have part of all other doctrine, specially of noble philosophy. And to say the truth, no man can apprehend the very delectation that is in the lesson of noble poets unless he have read much and in divers authors of divers learnings." Dr. Johnson in the famous "dissertation upon poetry" in *Rasselas* (chap. x) finds poetry the "highest learning",—and for the poet "no kind of knowledge . . . to be overlooked."

<sup>54</sup> *Complete Poems*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, p. 5. Cp. Shakespeare, who makes Hamlet in the play scene express the dictum that the censure of one judicious overweighs that of a whole theater of others. Hamelius (*Was dachte Shakespeare über Poesie*, p. 12) remarks: "Im grossen Ganzen freilich müssen wir annehmen, dass er die Poesie als eine Frucht der Bildung und als das Eigentum der Gebildeten, nicht als eine schlichte Blüte des Volkslebens, ansah."

readers"; and in his *Instructions* poets are advised to use some learned or covert means of avoiding the "uncomely customs of common writers."<sup>55</sup>

Gabriel Harvey, as a sustainer of the aristocracy of learning and an arch-enemy of ignorance, complains with asperity that "we that were simply trained after the Athenian and Roman guise must be content to make room for roisters that know their place and will not take it."<sup>56</sup> "God help us," he exclaims in another place, "when ignorance and want of experience, usurping the chair of scrupulous and rigorous judgment, will . . . presume farther, by infinite degrees, than the learnedest men in a civil commonwealth, or the sagest counsellors in a prince's court!"<sup>57</sup> His predilection for a display of learning by which poetry might be elevated above the scope of an unlearned writer is shown in his comment on Spenser's *Dreams*, which he likes "passingly well" because they savor of the work of the "fine conceited Grecians" in containing "nothing vulgar" and in being "a degree or two at the least above the reach and compass of a common scholar's capacity."<sup>58</sup>

Spenser and Sidney, though they are largely free from the narrow pedantry frequently shown in Harvey, both manifest the tendency of the times to associate poetry with learning. Spenser, who himself commends Sackville's "learned muse,"<sup>59</sup> and whose *Shepherd's Calendar* is praised by Whetstone as "a work of deep learning,"<sup>60</sup> by his learned allegorical devices and his wealth of classical allusion, so impressed his contemporaries with his erudition "that some of them accounted him more a classical scholar than a poet,"<sup>61</sup> Lodge, for instance, admiring him as being the "best read in ancient poetry." He himself regards poetry as the labor of the learned, complaining in his *Tears of the Muses*:

<sup>55</sup> Smith, i, 48.

<sup>56</sup> *Pierce's Supererogation*, Smith ii, 251.

<sup>57</sup> *Four Letters*, Smith, ii, 238.

<sup>58</sup> Letter to Spenser, Smith, i, 114-115.

<sup>59</sup> Sonnet (1590)—cf. *Cambridge History*, ii, 225.

<sup>60</sup> Moulton *Library of Criticism*, i, 375.

<sup>61</sup> J. B. Fletcher, "Areopagus and Pleiade," p. 443. Possibly Spenser was not unconscious of a "display of erudition which he knew would be acceptable to the Queen," as Courthope says of Lyly (*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 198). Lyly writes flatteringly of Elizabeth's "godly zeal to learning with her great skill" (*Euphues and His England*, Arber, p. 459). One of the qualifications of James VI's "perfect poet" is "skillfulness, where learning may be spyit" (Smith, i, 211).

Each idle wit at will presumes to make,  
 And doth the learned's task upon him take . . . . .  
 Whilst Ignorance the Muses doth oppress . . . . .  
 The learned's meed is now lent to the fool.

As a sympathizer with the Areopagus enterprise, he participated in the ideal "that poetry must go hand in hand with learning, that the arch-enemy of the muses was ignorance, that poetry in their day languished because the great were given over to luxury and the vulgar would listen only to a horde of unlearned and base rimesters."<sup>82</sup> Sidney also shares in this attitude. He repeatedly associates poetry with learning, declaring, for instance, that Gower and Chaucer were the first in English to make poetry "aspire to be a treasure-house of science."<sup>83</sup> He deplores the fact that poetry has fallen "from almost the highest estimation of learning," apologizes for his "barbarism" in being moved by the rude old ballad of Percy and Douglas, stipulates that his ideal poet (though romantic) proceed with "learned discretion," and, associating learning and allegory, conjures his readers to believe "that there are many mysteries contained in poetry, which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused."<sup>84</sup>

The motive of confounding the rabble of rimesters by means of learning is evinced clearly by Stanyhurst, who—though himself accused by Nash of recalling all of the "hissed barbarism" hurled for a hundred years—dedicating the prefaces to his translation of the *Denoid* to the nobility and the "learned reader," exclaims against the ignorant fry of "wooden rythmours" that "like blind bayards rush on forward, fostering their vain conceits with such overweening silly follies, as they reck not to be condemned of the learned for ignorant, so they be commended of the ignorant for learned." And he thinks the readiest way "to flap these drones from the sweet scenting hives of poetry is for the learned to apply themselves wholly . . . . to the true making of verses in such wise as the Greeks and Latins, the fathers of knowledge

<sup>82</sup> R. E. N. Dodge, *Cambridge ed. Spenser*, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 152. It may be noted that the assumption of intellectual and spiritual culture on the part of the reader in the poetry of Elizabethan "romanticists" like Sidney and Spenser differentiates it somewhat from the poetry of eighteenth century "classicists" like Pope and Johnson, though not, perhaps, from that of Collins and Gray, again (early) romanticists. That is to say, romanticism has at times presumed a more "learned" audience than classicism.

<sup>84</sup> *Ib.*, 151, 159, 206.

have done, and to leave to these doltish coystrels their rude rythming and balductum ballads."<sup>65</sup>

The identity of poetry and learning is especially emphasized by Webbe, as would be expected from his pedagogical prepossession; and in considering the work of the English poets his attribution of poetic excellence is determined largely by the amount of learning displayed. He looks to poetry for "deep knowledge," and thinks a good poet is to be commended as a "painful furtherer of learning." Gascoigne, he finds, falls somewhat short, because he is wanting in "some parts of learning." Spenser, however, is to be praised for his "most exquisite learning as shewed abundantly" in the *Shepherd's Calendar* wherein "much matter uttered somewhat covertly" affords great "delight at his learned conveyance." Spenser and Harvey, he decides, are two of the "learnedest masters of poetry in England."<sup>66</sup> He finds rime objectionable on the ground that it is a "barbarous custom, being within compass of every base wit." One of his main purposes is to stir up the "learned laureate masters" that they may "challenge" poetry "from the rude multitude of rustical rimers"<sup>67</sup> who mangle and deface their "noble studies."

Nash, who deems "him far unworthy of the name of scholar . . . . that is not a poet,"<sup>68</sup> likewise pleads vehemently for the "suppression of the ravenous rabble" who discredit learning, and, in accord with Ben Jonson's later saying, "art hath an enemy called ignorance,"<sup>69</sup> asserts that "there is no such discredit of art as an ignorant artificer."<sup>70</sup> He complains that it is a common practice in his day "amongst a sort of

<sup>65</sup> Smith, i, 141.

<sup>66</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 242, 245, 264.

<sup>67</sup> *Ib.*, 227, 278.

<sup>68</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 317.

<sup>69</sup> *England's Parnassus* (1600), *Heliconia*, iii. Cf. also Ben Jonson's lines on Shakespeare:

In his well tuned, and true filed lines;  
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,  
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.

The feeling gaining ground at the end of the century that ignorance is being overcome is further expressed by R. Allot, editor of *England's Parnassus*, in his prefatory verses:

I pickt these flowers of learning from their stem,  
Whose heavenly wits and golden pens have chased  
Dull Ignorance that long affronted them.

<sup>70</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 334.

shifting companions," who try all trades and thrive by none and who "could scarcely Latinize their neck-verse," "to leave the trade of *noverint*, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavors of art,"<sup>71</sup> One of the main motives of such men in invading the field of poetry, however, is, by virtue of the prevailing idea that poetry shows learning, "to have the praise of learning which they lack." The pity is that these presumptuous "buzzards," by their ignorant insolence, "make the learned sort to be silent."<sup>72</sup>

Puttenham and Harington, writing from the standpoint of courtiers, both assume throughout the prevalent view that poetry signifies learning. Comparing Chaucer with other fourteenth century poets, Puttenham, for instance, finds him to be "the most renowned of them all, for the much learning appeareth to be in him, above any of the rest."<sup>73</sup> Harington, appropriating the aristocratic obscurity of allegory as a protection for poetry, deems "poetical writing . . . . an excellent way to preserve all kind of learning from that corruption which now it is come to since they left that mystical writing of verse," and thinks that the "veil of fables and verse" serves well to keep learning from being "rashly abused by profane wits."<sup>74</sup> It was such an attitude as this that prompted Hall in publishing his satires to anticipate as one of the "obvious cavils" that would be brought against them, that of "too much stooping to the low reach of the vulgar."<sup>75</sup>

The idea of the aristocracy of poetry as a branch of learning, common among the translators, is frankly avowed by Chapman. He addresses the first preface to his Homer "To the Reader," but, as he is careful to specify, to "no mere reader." In his later installment he is still more select, addressing his remarks "To the Understander" and scorning "common dispositions" and "idle capacities" incapable of appreciating "an elaborate poem."<sup>76</sup> In defending his diction he shows further contempt for the unlearned, maintaining that "an elegancy authentically derived . . . . of the upper house" may "be entertained as well in their lower consultation with authority of art as their own forgeries lick up by

<sup>71</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 311-312.

<sup>72</sup> *Anatomy*, Smith, i, 323, 327.

<sup>73</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 64.

<sup>74</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 203.

<sup>75</sup> *Satires* (1597), Postscript to Reader, *Complete Poems*, Grosart, pp. 103-5.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, ii, 295, 304. He desires to be, as Thomas Gray said of his *Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, "vocal to the intelligent alone" (Letter to Brown, Feb. 17, 1763).

nature," which latter, he thinks, tend to "bring the plague of barbarism amongst us."<sup>77</sup> The same attitude is expressed in his declaration tha

"Worthiest poets  
Shun common and plebeian forms of speech."<sup>78</sup>

Campion, voicing the prevailing abhorrence of the critics for the rudeness of the earlier poetry, like Ascham and Webbe objects to rime on account of its barbarousness and its origin in "lack learning times" and declares that this "vulgar and unartificial custom" has "deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesie." One of the chief objections to the use of rime, he believes with other critics, is that it makes the mystery of verse craft too easily accessible to the unlearned rabble, its "facility and popularity" creating "as many poets as hot summer flies."<sup>79</sup>

With Daniel the view changes as to the lowness of rime, though the association of poetry with learning is still maintained. Addressing the "learned professors of rime" in the prefatory note to his *Defense*, he proceeds to argue that the so-called barbaric rime may be made as excellent and learned as the supposedly erudite classical metres, and that the latter would also be open to perversions of ignorance more dreadful than would be possible in case of rime.<sup>80</sup> Thus in his defense of rime he intends no compromise with poetic barbarism. Moreover, he writes in poetic form a "Defense of Learning," in which he expresses the opinion that it is the overthrowing of

that holy reverent bound  
That parted learning and the laity<sup>81</sup>

that has lowered the estimate of literary genius. In the dedication of his *Delia* he exhorts Lady Pembroke as "patroness of the Muses . . . . to preserve them from those hideous beasts, Oblivion and Barbarism"; and in dedicating his *Cleopatra* to the same patroness he writes:

Now where so many pens (like spears) are charg'd,  
To chase away this tyrant of the North;

<sup>77</sup> *Ib.*, 305-6.

<sup>78</sup> *Plays*, ed. R. H. Shepherd, p. 185.

<sup>79</sup> *Observations*, Smith, ii, 327, 330.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, ii, 379.

<sup>81</sup> *Musophilus*, l. 689. In his Epistle Dedicatory to *Licia*, Giles Fletcher complains: "Yet now it is grown to this pass, that learning is lightly respected; upon a persuasion that it is to be found everywhere: a thing untrue and impossible."

Gross Barbarism, whose power grown far inlarg'd  
 Was lately by thy valiant brother's worth  
 First found, encountered, and provoked forth:  
 Whose onset made the rest audacious,  
 Whereby they likewise have so well discharg'd  
 Upon that hideous beast incroaching thus.

The insistent association of poetry and learning by the critics of this period, as well as the favor shown such learned devices as the mystery of allegory and the mystery of classical verse craft, was evidently prompted by the earnest desire of advancing the interests of English poetry. By such association it was hoped to gain for the art something of the prestige generally accorded to learning, and to restore to it something of the distinction and reverence in which it was anciently held. Moreover, there was the great hope that by investing poetry with the halo and mystery of learning the art might be saved from the destructive and discreditable forces of ignorance and barbarism. Lacking the organized force of a Pleiade or Academy, the critics, singly or in little groups, labored so to hedge poetry within the protection of learning as to exclude the multitude of ignorant artificers, and so to limit its practice to the learned elect as to elevate and sanctify the art as the height of all knowledge, the flower of all learning.

#### 4. Poetry and Aristocracy

Caxton's declaration in the prologue to his *Aeneid* (1490) that "this book is not for every rude and uncunning man," but rather "for clerks and very gentlemen that understand gentleness and science,"<sup>82</sup> indicates the twofold character of the resource to be found in the aristocracy of culture as a means of elevating and preserving poetry. The art was to be saved by "gentleness and science," by gentlemen and scholars, and to this intent the critics, often belonging themselves in greater or less measure to one class or the other,<sup>83</sup> made their appeal. The social appeal was more difficult than the appeal to learning, though certain conditions favored it. The passing of chivalry, for instance, caused men to

<sup>82</sup> Prol. *Aeneid*, *op. cit.* Gavin Douglas, though disgusted with Caxton's ill rendering of Virgil, similarly declares the aristocracy of his author, "whose poem is to be read for the heroic examples it offers to princes and governors, and which is not to be studied by unlearned and ignorant men" (Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 132).

<sup>83</sup> At opposite poles, for instance, stand men like Jonson and Puttenham, the one all for learning, the other for birth; but each in his way upholds the aristocracy of poetry.

grasp at new means of attaining courtly distinction, and poetry seemed to afford such a means. Moreover, exhortations were not wanting in behalf of poetry as a courtierly accomplishment. There was the authority of Castiglione that one of the distinctions of a courtier should be "knowledge of letters," that he ought to be able to write in polished language "both rime and prose,"—for "he that savoreth not the sweetness of letters cannot know how much is the greatness of glory."<sup>84</sup> Gentlemen were urged by George Pettie, in the preface to his translation of Guazzo's *Conversations* (1586), "never to be ashamed to show your learning . . . . it is only it which maketh you gentlemen, and . . . . the only way to win immortality is either to do things worth the writing, or write things worth the reading." In his *Honor Military and Civil*, William Segar promulgated similar doctrine, declaring that a man "hardly deserveth any title of honor" who does not take pleasure either in arms or letters and that "very rarely doth any man excel in arms that is utterly ignorant of good letters."<sup>85</sup>

The elegant courtier, however, was very shy about entering the field of poetry, at least in print, and thereby associating himself with the "ravenous rabble" of versifiers also aspiring for honor, or lucre. It took more to win him over than such reassuring arguments as that of Nicholas Ling, who declares that "if any man whatsoever in prizing of his own birth or fortune, shall take in scorn that a far meaner man in the eye of the world shall be placed by him, I tell him plainly . . . . that that man's wit is set by his, not that man by him."<sup>86</sup> The courtier usually refused to publish the treasures of his wit, limiting their circulation rather to his own social circle and guarding them from the inspection of the vulgar public. Translations of foreign masterpieces, as being above the reach of common wits and the emulation of low rimesters, might be published with the assumption that they were intended for the perusal of scholars and gentlemen. In general, it was deemed necessary to differentiate the product of the courtly muse from that of the rabble by such features of content or style as would insure distinct recognition, for only in this way could the courtier or aspirant for court favor participate in poetry without compromising his social standing by placing himself beside "a far meaner man in the eye of the world."

<sup>84</sup> Einstein, *Italian Renaissance in England*, pp. 91, 92.

<sup>85</sup> *Ib.*, 93, 109, 110.

<sup>86</sup> Jusserand's *Literary History*, ii, 382.

The courtier adherents of the Areopagus, whose "gospel of new poetry was limited to gentlemen and scholars," "the very last thing in their intention" being "to write as common people do,"<sup>87</sup> were without doubt actuated largely by some such motive as that of Lyly in his *Euphues*, namely, to differentiate the style of court literature from that of the rude multitude. Their principal object, according to Spenser, who acknowledged himself drawn "to their faction," was "a general surceasing of bald rimers."<sup>88</sup> Spenser, to be sure, soon gave up the quantitative verse scheme; but in entering the field of poetry against the despised rimesters in rime, he took great pains to adopt other means to vanquish and discredit the "rakehelly rout" and differentiate his work from theirs.

Indeed, the difficulties involved in the social aspects of poetry were apparently more keenly felt by Spenser than by any other poet. Sidney, being in a more independent position, evaded the issue by refusing to publish any of his works during his lifetime. But with Spenser, an ambitious poetic genius in poverty, almost life itself depended on such distinction in print as would gain him substantial recognition over the common versifier; and bitterly does he inveigh against the lack of such recognition, and against the "Tom Pipers," "the base-born brood of blindness" that "rime at riot," and the "boldness of such base-born men," who "dare their follies forth so rashly throw."<sup>89</sup> Noble poetry, he complains, formerly the "nursling of nobility," "the care of kaisers and of kings," whose place "is prince's palace the most fit,"<sup>90</sup> has fallen from its "sovereign dignity" and is suffered to be "profaned . . . . of the base vulgar," its status being in sorry contrast to that of past ages when none but "princes and high priests" might profess "that secret skill."<sup>91</sup> Further manifestations of Spenser's aristocratic temper and purpose are not wanting. More than once, for instance, feeling the need "of establishing his gentility," he evinces pride in having descended from a noble house.<sup>92</sup> He shows a courtierly attitude in his slowness to

<sup>87</sup> J. B. Fletcher, "*Areopagus and Pleiade*," pp. 437, 452. "Excellency hath in all ages affected singularity", observes Harvey (Smith, ii, 283).

<sup>88</sup> Letter to Harvey, Smith, i, 89.

<sup>89</sup> *Tears of the Muses*, ll. 220, 392.

<sup>90</sup> *Shepherd's Calendar*, October eclogue.

<sup>91</sup> *Tears of the Muses*, ll. 560, 567.

<sup>92</sup> E. g. in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* and in *Prothalamion*. Breton, Nash and others take pains to write themselves down as gentlemen. Drayton uses his title "Esquire". "Every poet writes squire now", says Jonson (Induction, *Magnetic Lady*).

publish and in his fear as a gentleman to be thought to write "for gain and commodity,"<sup>93</sup> expressing contempt for those who do. Moreover, in his *Faery Queen*, in which, desiring "to be counted respectable and to separate himself from the crowd of foolish or licentious rimers,"<sup>94</sup> he openly avows an "aristocratic intention"<sup>95</sup> in his declaration that "the general end and aim of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline," a purpose not dissimilar to the courtly aims of Lyly's *Euphues*.<sup>96</sup> Confirmation of such an intention is further manifested in his combination of the aristocratic devices of allegory and chivalric romance, and in his dedication of the poem to the Queen and his recommendations of it in seventeen sonnets to all the Court, one of these sonnets containing the assertion that the "fairer parts" of his poem "are hid from common view."

Sidney, who by refraining from print avoided the humiliation of being associated with the rabble of base rimesters, presents the aristocracy of poetry in a more general and abstract aspect, though in viewing the state of poetry in England in the concrete he is as strongly averse as Spenser to the profaning of the art by the participation in it of "base wits." He also characteristically gives expression to the doctrine that nobility is indicated by excellence in art, finding "in the Earl of Surrey's lyrics many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind." The low rimesters or poet-apes, possessing neither nobility of birth nor of mind, Sidney could not tolerate in poetry. His general attitude is evinced further by his own courtly sonnet sequence, and his chivalric romance; and by his participation in the ideals of the Areopagus, followed by his noble Apology in which his conception of the poet is in the highest sense of the term aristocratic.

The conception of poetry as a prerogative of aristocracy is notably represented in the work of Puttenham, who, constituting himself a sort of court critic and undertaking his "travail" for the instruction of courtiers, aims to accomplish for the courtier's poetic culture what

<sup>93</sup> Letter to Harvey, Smith, i, 88.

<sup>94</sup> Church, R. W., *Life of Spenser*, p. 85.

<sup>95</sup> Jusserand, *Literary History*, ii, 476.

<sup>96</sup> Lyly, addressing "Gentlemen Readers," scorns all others: "I know gentlemen will find no fault without cause . . . as for others I care not for their jests, for I never meant to make them my judges." Cp. Chapman, who also disclaims all ambition to please the vulgar: "The profane multitude I hate, and only consecrate my strange poems to those searching spirits, whom learning hath made noble and nobility sacred" (*Cambridge History*, vi, 35.)

Castiglione aimed to do for his all around culture. Purposing "to satisfy not the school but the court,"<sup>97</sup> he makes bold to differentiate himself from the former for whose scholasticism he shows some contempt. Like all the critics he is eager to make all possible connections between royalty and nobility and poetry, and he makes the most of Elizabeth's dabbling in the art.

As befits a courtier critic, Puttenham's fundamental literary doctrine is that of decorum, the application of which he, like some of the other critics, transfers as a matter of course from the sphere of social distinctions to distinctions in the province of art; for instance, he divides the subject-matter of poetry into "high," "mean," and "base and low,"—and the affairs and lives of those dealt with in the last, being not "like high," do not "require to be set forth with like style, but everyone in his degree and decency."<sup>98</sup> Moreover, "the poet must know to whose ear he maketh his rime, and accommodate himself thereto, and not give such music to the rude and barbarous, as he would to the learned and delicate ear." "Measures pleasing only to the popular ear," such as those "made purposely for the recreation of the common people," must "in our courtly maker" be banished utterly;<sup>99</sup> in their courtly ditties delicate poets must avoid practices that "smatch" of the "school of common players"; and in general poetic decoration should depart "from the common course of ordinary speech and capacity of the vulgar judgment."<sup>100</sup> Not ordinarily admitting mean and base personages in their works, poets should, as Chapman said, "shun common and plebeian forms of speech,"<sup>101</sup> and not follow the speech of craftsmen and carters or others "of the inferior sort," but rather the language of the Court and of "men civil and graciously behavoured and bred."<sup>102</sup>

In accordance with the Elizabethan critical and social tenet of decorum, the critics—especially Puttenham with his extended treatment of different kinds—assume a sort of aristocratic gradation of poetic kinds

<sup>97</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 166.

<sup>98</sup> *Ib.*, 158. Sidney observes this doctrine in his *Arcadia* when he changes from classic metre to rime, in the latter making his character, a shepherd, observe that his estate does not call for the higher style.

<sup>99</sup> *Ib.*, 87, 91.

<sup>100</sup> *Ib.*, 132, 142.

<sup>101</sup> *Plays*, ed. R. H. Shepherd, p. 186.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, ii, 150.

and forms. They agree, for instance, that the despised ballad is at the antipodes as compared with the grand and stately epic, other forms ranging between. The sonnet holds its place<sup>103</sup> as a fashionable courtly form until it becomes grossly abused by the multitude without the pale. In general, critics encourage such superiority and distinction of thought and form as would preserve poetry as an aristocratic art secure from the dishonor of base rimesters. Courtly makers must not only avoid low and plebeian forms but must task their wits to introduce, adapt, or invent new forms and styles, investing their works with such distinction as to elevate them above the reproach of being common or vulgar and make them acceptable in the higher circles of polite society. Such motives for distinction are not wanting in the rise of Petrarchism, Euphuism, Platonism, court allegory, court romance, Arcadianism, and even in the "craze for classical metres."

The theory of the aristocracy of poetry, acceptable alike to court and school, was prompted, even with court critics and poets, by a further and broader motive than that of furnishing, in lieu of the old practices of chivalry, a means of courtly honor and distinction. Perhaps as never at any other time in the history of the nation, were the two powerful motives of aristocracy and patriotism operative in combination for the elevation of letters. The social motive was strongly grounded in a well-intentioned and patriotic endeavor to promote the best interests of poetry as a national possession. With the great spread of education and the consequent democratic tendency of the people to share in the good things of life, poetry, in the general decay of feudalism, was falling a prey to the multitude, and thereby, it was thought, being subjected to such barbarism, degradation, and disgrace as to portend its demoralization and threaten its very existence in any higher sense. Scholars and courtly makers therefore rallied in defense to preserve the art from the besieging forces of ignorance and baseness. The rabble of poet-apes must be suppressed and there must be no pandering to the taste of the groundlings. Since it was found impossible entirely to bar poetry from polluting hands, all possible means must be employed so to elevate the art as to make it at its best unmistakably superior, and distinguished from its lower aspects of crudeness and debasement; and this endeavor for the conservation and exaltation of poetic art is manifested not only in the criticism of the time, but is reflected likewise in the character and spirit of the poetry itself.

<sup>103</sup> Though apparently it was always scorned by such critics as Jonson and Marston.

### 5. Instruction

In their aspirations for the betterment of English poetry, the critics realized that one of the great needs was that of instruction. Half knowledge having proved demoralizing, the remedy was more knowledge, and in the militant, optimistic spirit of the time the critics had courage to undertake the task of furnishing it. The didactic spirit, fostered by the new learning and otherwise regnant, as in books of courtesy and often in polite letters, was strongly upon them. Lacking an academy, or organized unity of effort, they rose, singly or in small groups, eager as painful furtherers of learning and bringers of light to dispel inadequate and erroneous ideas and to teach what to do and how to do, even the most abstract and philosophical of their works arising out of the desire to meet problems that they considered practical and of the utmost importance. Their treatises, however, were not intended for all the people. Before poetry could come to its own, even men of learning and rank must be instructed, or at least persuaded to turn their studies seriously to its mysteries; while the ignorant and low were to be deterred from mangling and polluting an art that was beyond the scope of their mental and spiritual capacity.

The motive of affording instruction in one way or another, so often professed by authors and printers from Caxton down, is, therefore, because of the patriotic concern to meet actual needs, especially strong with all who turn their energies to the advancement of poetry. Ascham, as a classical scholar and schoolmaster to royalty, manifests a practical, tutorial attitude throughout his disquisition on "Imitation" and elsewhere in his *Schoolmaster*. Gascoigne in his notes of "Instruction" in verse-making is, with a purpose of definite helpfulness, plainly didactic both in subject-matter and in manner of presentation. Lodge, in his reply to Gosson taunts the latter with having lost his learning since he left the university, and, scornfully chiding him, "once a scholar," for doltish disloyalty to the teachings of his old masters there, and declaring that he dispraises poetry knowing "not what it means,"<sup>104</sup> he proceeds to enlighten him and his like by recalling such instructions in poetry as he has forgotten. James VI, King of Scots, writing his *Rules and Cautels* for the "docile bairns of knowledge" who, already possessing some knowledge of poetry, have "an earnest desire to attain to farther,"<sup>105</sup> is avowedly a preceptor in poetry, and he feels that as such he is meeting a

<sup>104</sup> Smith, i, 66.

<sup>105</sup> *Ib.*, 208.

need of his countrymen. Even E. K., in view of the untutored state of his contemporaries, manifests in both his preface and his gloss to the *Shepherd's Calendar* a solicitously preceptorial spirit in his explanations of the subject-matter and style of the work of the new poet, hoping to aid the readers to "savor" such "celestial food."

Sidney's work, although less ostensibly didactic and dealing less with details of form and style, is nevertheless more fundamentally educative in motive than that of any other critic of the period. He goes back of the superficial aspects of poetry involved in form and style, feeling that the most essential service he can render poetry in England is to set forth a larger and truer conception of the nature and function of the art and higher ideals as to its import and influence. Realizing that the reason why troublesome poet-apes were filling the bookstalls with their crude productions and having them pass as poetry was that neither they nor the English reading public possessed any adequate apprehension of the character and significance of real poetry, and feeling, therefore, that the first step toward the betterment of the art must be a better understanding of its high character and purpose, he endeavors to dispel the crude, mechanical notions that seem to prevail, and to establish vital principles of poetry as imaginative literature and as a high and noble instrument for the well-being of the individual and the nation. Although he leaves largely to others the task of furnishing instruction in the details of "art and imitation," neither of which "we use . . . rightly," he insists upon the necessity on the part of those who have to do with poetry of seeking "to know what they do, and how they do."<sup>106</sup>

Webbe, tutor to the sons of Edward Suliard and zealous as a furtherer of national learning, becomes in his *Discourse of English Poesy* a teacher and exhorter in the cause of poetry, his desire being not only to contribute his own knowledge but to attract to the study of the art the energies of more able wits. His contribution comprises a survey of poetry among the ancients, a commentary on English poets down to his own day and including contemporary poets, a discussion of the subjects and kinds of poetry, and an exposition by precept and example of his knowledge of versification; and he appends, as a further help and guide, a translation of Fabricius's summary of the rules of Horace. By his own efforts and those of others who may be impelled to aid in the program of poetical education in England he hopes that "we may . . . get the means, which we yet want, to discern between good writers and bad" and in

<sup>106</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 195.

good time establish the "right practice and orderly course of true poetry."<sup>107</sup>

Puttenham, in a treatise the most extensively didactic of all, spares no pains to furnish English "courtiers, for whose instruction this travail is taken," with the "whole receipt of poetry," compiling for their benefit a marvelous store of information pertaining to the art that he is zealous to teach them, so that "though they be to seek of the Greek and Latin languages" they shall not "lament for lack of knowledge sufficient to the purpose of this art."<sup>108</sup> In the three books making up his *Art of English Poesy*, namely, "Of Poets and Poesy," "Of Proportion Poetical," and "Of Ornament," he attempts to supply information on all possible aspects of the subject, devoting himself in the main, however, to practical matters of forms and kinds, methods, prosody, and figures of speech.

The prominence of the didactic motive in Elizabethan criticism of poetry is further evinced in the controversy between Campion and Daniel. Campion, in his endeavor to "induce a true form of versifying" with the aim of displacing the "vulgar and unartificial custom of riming," which he knows has "deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesy,"<sup>109</sup> devotes himself chiefly to the exposition of the forms of verse that he wishes to be adopted, his purpose being not only to persuade poets to make the departure but also to teach them how to proceed.

In his reply to Campion, Daniel, like Sidney, in a high and broad sense assumes the office of teacher. Just as Sidney had promulgated better conceptions of the nature and function of poetry, so Daniel contributes needful ideas concerning the question of form. Men like Campion had been obsessed by the idea that English poetry could best be saved and elevated by the adoption of some peculiarly elegant or difficult manner of writing that would place it out of the reach of ignorant and base practitioners. Daniel demonstrates clearly, for the first time in Elizabethan criticism, that any particular form is not inherently high or low, aristocratic or plebeian, but excellent or wretched largely according to the excellence or wretchedness of execution. Classical metres, he points out, would be as subject to mangling perversions of versifiers as rime, and results would naturally be even more crude and barbaric. In other words, Daniel, like Sidney, taught the much-needed lesson that

<sup>107</sup> Smith, i, 227.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, ii, 163.

<sup>109</sup> *Ib.*, 327.

the salvation of English poetry lay in larger and more intelligent conceptions, higher standards, and severer discipline; and like Sidney, Daniel—in view of “that wrong measure of confusion . . . that never takes his ways by reason, but by imitation, rolling on with the rest, and never weighs the course which he should go”<sup>110</sup>—sought to dispel narrow and false ideas about poetry and to uplift and advance the art by applying in its service the best results of mental and spiritual intelligence. Daniel’s theory of form, a contribution based upon the experience of his generation, finally settled a much-mooted question of Elizabethan criticism.

Elizabethan criticism of poetry indisputably was written in the main with reference to the literary conditions of the time, and even its origin—a fact which scholars sometimes seem to overlook—is to be ascribed chiefly to contemporary conditions, needs, and problems. The critics, awakened to a lively interest in the state of poetry and finding it unsatisfactory, seek with varying degrees of clearness of apprehension to find causes and remedies for the evils attending the art. They in general agree that the main source of evil is to be found in the insistent participation in poetry of ignorant and vulgar practitioners, whereby the art is degraded and discredited. Subsidiary to this main evil and largely consequent upon it are further hindrances, namely: the inferior taste of a growing multitude of uncultured readers; the non-participation in poetry, because of social scruples, of men of talent and rank; and the lack of adequate literary patronage. Earnestly desiring to meet and overcome these evils, the critics endeavor, by appealing to patriotism and by seeking to gain for poetry the prestige resulting from its association with learning and rank, that they may so elevate the art as to save it from threatened demoralization and attract to it the sympathy and coöperation of the best and greatest spirits of the time, hoping thereby in good time to make it a bounteous source of national honor and national benefit. At the same time, realizing the great need of more adequate knowledge in theory and practice, they bend their energies to the task of advancing poetry by furnishing its more capable representatives with the best possible instruction as to the nature, function, and form of the art. The result is a further body of critical theory—to be dealt with in the following pages—which, though in its sudden rise inadequate and sometimes erroneous in itself as measured by the later development of the art

<sup>110</sup> *Musophilus*, *Works*, i, 228.

of criticism, is nevertheless of distinct interest and value when viewed as a reflection of the literary ideals of the sixteenth century, and as an attempt to meet the conditions and needs of a period during which English poetry, pursued as never before or since, attained a standard of excellence which is still the delight and marvel of the English-speaking world.

## THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF POETRY

### I. THE EXALTED NATURE OF POETRY—GIFT AND INSPIRATION

One of the cardinal points in Elizabethan theory of poetry, magnified by conditions but strongly grounded in the temper and convictions of the poets and critics of the time and powerfully reflected in creative literature, is that of the exalted nature of poetic art. The first critic strongly to emphasize the transcendent character of poetry and the doctrine of divine inspiration is Thomas Lodge, who in this respect is something of a forerunner of Sidney and Spenser,—though the idea of divine inspiration had also appealed to Sir Thomas Elyot, who in his *Governor*<sup>1</sup> was pleased to note that “in poets was supposed to be science mystical and inspired” and that “Tully in his Tusculane questions supposeth that a poet cannot abundantly express verses . . . . without celestial instinct, which is also by Plato ratified.” Lodge in his defense labors hard to exalt poetry, and using scriptural and classical references he draws copiously upon the resources of his scholastic training, piling up instances to show the high character and estimation of poetry among the ancients; Homer, for instance, being accounted by them no less than *humanus deus*. Though he reasons “not that all poets are holy,” yet he affirms that “poetry is a heavenly gift, a perfit gift.” Who does “not wonder at poetry? Who thinketh not that it proceedeth from above”—“that heavenly fury”?<sup>2</sup> *Poeta nascitur* he interprets to mean that “poetry cometh from above, from a heavenly seat of a glorious God, unto an excellent creature man.” Solomon, David, and other men near to God were poets. Lodge does not know of the case of Cædmon, but Ennius among the Romans received the “heavenly fury” while “sleeping on the Mount of Parnassus,” where “he dreamed that he received the soul of Homer into him, after the which he became a poet.” Persius was made a poet *Divino furore percitus*. Hesiodus, speaking for the Greeks, assures us that poetry “cometh not by labor, neither that night watchings bringeth it, but that we must have it thence whence he fetched it . . . . from a well of the Muses . . . . a draught whereof drew him to his perfection; so of a shepherd he became an eloquent poet.” The poets were said to call upon the Muses for help, but “their

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Croft, i, 122.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, i, 64, 70, 75.

meaning was no other . . . . but to call for heavenly inspiration from above to direct their endeavors." It is not good, therefore, "to set light by the name of a poet, since the offspring from whence he cometh is so heavenly." Moreover, "a strange token," this divine inspiration is reflected in style,— "when their matter is most heavenly their style is most lofty." In short, Lodge concludes that it is plain that poetry "cometh not by exercise of play making, neither insertion of gauds, but from nature, and from above."<sup>3</sup> This idea he expresses in rapturous verse in his epistle "To Master Michael Drayton":<sup>4</sup>

Oh let that holy flame, that heavenly light,  
That led old Abraham's race in darksome night . . . .  
Conduct thy Muse unto that holy pitch,  
Which may thy style with praises more enrich.

The heavenly fury doctrine is enthusiastically held by E. K., who, it is significant, finds it notably exemplified in the "new poetry" of the *Shepherd's Calendar*. Commenting, in his gloss, on the last part of the October eclogue, he declares that the author "seemeth here to be ravished with a poetical fury." Of the emblem of this eclogue, (*Est deus in nobis*) *agitante calescimus illo*, he says, "hereby is meant, as also in the whole course of this eclogue, that poetry is a divine instinct, and unnatural rage, passing the reach of common reason." His comment in the argument to this eclogue is significant as indicating Spenser's own theory, which he had presented "at large" in his *English Poet*. Poetry is "a divine gift and heavenly instinct," declares E. K., "not to be gotten by labor and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a certain *εὐθουσιασμός* and celestial inspiration, as the author hereof elsewhere at large discourseth in his book called *The English Poet*." Although E. K. is much gratified to find the heavenly fury idea exemplified in the theory and practice of Spenser, he is disturbed to find manifestations of something similar in writers who ought to be deterred from poetic practice altogether. "The rakehelly rout of our ragged rimers," he complains, "without reason rage and foam, as if some instinct of poetical spirit had newly ravished them above the meanness of common capacity."<sup>5</sup> The "divine instinct and unnatural rage," unhappily for

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, 71-72.

<sup>4</sup> *A Fig for Momus*, Epistle 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ded. *Shepherd's Calendar*. Bishop Hall also complains later that men "whose talent is hardly worth a farthing" lay about them "so outrageously as if all Helicon had run through" their pens (*Martin Mar-Sixtus* [1592]; see Chappell, *Popular Music*, ii, 106).

poetry thought E. K. and others, could not in this age of Elizabeth be confined to the elect.

Spenser's characteristic attitude toward poetry is that of exaltation. The theory that poetic ability "is a divine gift and heavenly instinct" possessed his emotions and intellect, appealing powerfully to his religious feelings and animating his high aspirations for the art of poetry, toward which his attitude combines that of a chivalrous knight and a devout worshiper. To him the essential condition for poetic composition is to be found in a noble spirit in a high state of intellectual and emotional exaltation. Only under such circumstances can beauty, truth, and goodness receive adequate poetic expression; and with but a few select spirits is it possible,—the poetic "visitations of divinity in man"<sup>6</sup> are only to the elect. The idea that poetry is a manifestation of divine passion then appeals to Spenser especially for two reasons: first, it makes poetry a rare and unusual gift above the reach of ordinary mortals; and secondly, it makes it an almost sacred expression of the thoughts and feelings of noblest spirits at times of highest exaltation. This attitude toward poetry is strongly reflected in the tone and spirit of Spenser's own work, and indeed is consciously expressed in the very act of composition in one of his most characteristic poems, *An Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*.

Rapt with the rage of mine own ravisht thought,  
Through contemplation of those goodly sights,  
And glorious images in heaven wrought,  
Whose wondrous beauties, breathing sweet delights,  
Do kindle love in high conceited sprights;  
I fain to tell the things that I behold  
But feel my wits to fail, and tongue to fold.

Vouchsafe then, O thou most almighty Spright!  
From whom all gifts of wit and knowledge flow,  
To shed into my breast some sparkling light  
Of thine eternal truth, that I may show  
Some little beams to mortal eyes below  
Of that immortal beauty, there with thee.

The poetic spirit being in unison with the Divine,

Then shall thy ravisht soul inspired be  
With heavenly thoughts far above human skill,

<sup>6</sup> Shelley, *Defense of Poetry*.

And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see  
 Th' Idea of his pure glory present still  
 Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill  
 With sweet engagement of celestial love,  
 Kindled through sight of those fair things above.

The conclusion is warranted that Spenser's own work is deeply influenced by the doctrine of divine inspiration; and further, that the great difference between his poetry and that of Dryden and Pope is due, in large measure, to the faith held in common by Spenser and other Elizabethans that "peerless poesy" is a "heavenly instinct" and the result of heavenly exaltation. This faith, it may be added, fostered in such poets as Shelley the idea expressed in his *Defense of Poetry* that "poetry redeems from decay the visitations of divinity in man," and it made Spenser the "poets' poet."

An interesting instance of the way in which the exaltation of poetry by the doctrine of divine inspiration impressed itself is to be found in Henry Olney, the publisher of Sidney's *Apology*, who in his note "To the Reader" expresses himself on this point with enthusiasm corresponding to that of E. K. for the work of the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*. He calls upon "excellent poesy" to be his "defendress" and to commend her "most divinest fury," and expects to receive praise "as the first public bewrayer of poesy's messias," the "divine Sir Philip Sidney," who—apparently a poet by a sort of divine right of his nobility—with his "sacred pen-breathing words" has forever banished "the stormy winter . . . which hath so long held back the glorious sunshine of divine poesy."<sup>7</sup>

Sidney's genuinely exalted conception of poetry, closely akin to that of Spenser,<sup>8</sup> is eloquently set forth in his *Apology*, evidently with the intent of dispelling mean and inadequate notions of the art and elevating it to a position worthy of its high nature. In view of the perversions of the "poet-apes," he asserts that poetry, because of its very nature, "must not be drawn by the ears; it must be gently led, or rather it must lead." Recognizing its exalted qualities, the "ancient-learned affirm it . . . a divine gift, and no human skill." "All other knowledges lie ready for any that hath strength of wit," but no industry can make a

<sup>7</sup> Smith, i, 149.

<sup>8</sup> Prof. J. B. Fletcher speaks of the "bardic notion" of these two friends and thinks that "the simultaneous enunciation of a root principle of their art . . . can hardly be regarded as other than concerted action" ("Areopagus and Pleiade", p. 431).

poet if he has not the gift. The apish imitation of the matter and style of other men cannot result in poetry; the poet must be "overmastered" by the spiritual force stirring within his own soul. The genuine poets of antiquity were gifted with an instinctive perception of truth and beauty; and philosophers, attracted by the "true points of knowledge" contained in poetry, analyzed and put into method that which the poets before them "did only teach by a divine forgetfulness."<sup>9</sup> Sidney, like Lodge, holds that style as well as subject-matter is heightened by divine inspiration. Speaking again of poetry among the ancients, he says, "That same exquisite observing of number and measure in words, and that high flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet, did seem to have some divine force in it."<sup>10</sup> He cites Plato as attributing to poetry "a very inspiring of a divine force," and conjures his readers to believe with Landin that poets "are so beloved of the gods that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury."<sup>11</sup> Like Lodge, too, he seeks to establish the exalted nature of poetry by scriptural citations, affirming the holy David's psalms to be "a divine poem," for what else are "his notable prosopopœias, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in his majesty; his telling of the beasts' joyfulness, and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he sheweth himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith."<sup>12</sup> Here as elsewhere Sidney's exalted conception of poetry is animated by an ardent, worshipful religious fervor almost exactly paralleled in the attitude of Spenser.<sup>13</sup> Creative poetry is to him a religious

<sup>9</sup> Smith, i, 190.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 154. Cp. "Much is the force of heaven-bred poesy" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III, ii, 72); and "All true poets' raptures are divine" (Heywood, *Mermaid* ed., p. ix).

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 192, 206.

<sup>12</sup> *Ib.*, 154, 155.

<sup>13</sup> A further interesting parallel, exuberantly expressed, occurs in Barnaby Barnes' address "To the Favorable and Christian Reader" of *A Divine Century of Spiritual Sonnets* (1595): "The glorious subject . . . would . . . in some richer and more copious inventions, raise the triumphant chariot of your sacred muses above the star-bearing firmament; and upon the spiritual Pegasus of celestial poesy, in divine harmony of spirit, bear the writer to that majestic throne and hemicycle of incomparable state and comfortable dignity, where he should . . . forever sing . . . And if any man feel in himself, by the secret fire of immortal enthusiasm, the learned motions of strange and divine passions of spirit; let him refine and illuminate his numerous muses with the most sacred splendor of the Holy Ghost; and then he shall with divine Salust (the true learned French poet) find, that as human fury maketh a man less than a man

manifestation. The real poet with God-given power becomes a creator or maker, "doth grow in effect another nature," and "with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing" the "doings" of nature.<sup>14</sup> The conclusion is, that for the perception and poetic embodiment of highest beauty and truth the poet must be possessed of divine inspiration. In exaltation of spirit he must transcend this brazen world and enter into the golden heavenly world, for only thus can his art, with its "sweet and sacred mysteries," its "heart-ravishing knowledge," its "planet-like music," its "divine delightfulness," be poetry in the truest and highest sense.

James VI of Scotland, though sometimes reproached for his mechanical conception of poetry, holds enthusiastically, it appears, to the idea of divine inspiration of poets as of kings. In the title of his *Essays of a Prentice* he terms poetry a "divine art"; and in his *Urania or Heavenly Muse*, translated from Du Bartas, he places before his readers a most elevated conception of poetry involving the doctrine of divine inspiration.

All art is learned by art, this art alone  
It is a heavenly gift: no flesh nor bone  
Can preise the honey we from Pind distill,  
Except with holy fire his breast we fill . . . .  
A holy trance to highest heaven him bring:  
For, even as human fury makes the man  
Less than the man; so heavenly fury can  
Make man pass man, and wander in holy mist,  
Upon the fiery heaven to walk at list . . . .  
Even so, their fury lasting, lasts their tone;  
Their fury ceast, their muse doth stay anone.<sup>15</sup>

. . . . so divine rage and sacred instinct of a man maketh more than a man, and leadeth him from his base terrestrial estate, to walk above the stars with angels immortally" (*Heliconia*, ii, ed. T. Park). Harvey is moved to speak of Du Bartas as "a right inspired and enraptured poet . . . . even in the next degree to the sacred and reverend style of heavenly Divinity itself" (*Works*, Grosart, ii, 103).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, i, 156, 157. Cp. Wordsworth (end of *Prelude*):

The mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells, above this frame of things . . . .  
In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
Of quality and fabric more divine.

<sup>15</sup> See sections on "Poesy" and "Poets", *England's Parnassus, Heliconia*, iii. pp. 280, 284.

Webbe and Puttenham, neither of them having in any large measure experienced poetic inspiration, are not so enthusiastic with regard to the doctrine of heavenly inspiration, though both accept it as a matter of scholastic learning and as a means of elevating the conception of poetry. Webbe finds the opinion confirmed in the works of Plato and Aristotle that all wisdom and knowledge are "included mystically in that divine instinct wherewith they thought their *Vates* to be inspired."<sup>16</sup> Cicero also, he finds, considers "celestial instinct" necessary for the highest poetical expression. To the authority of the ancients on this matter he adds that of the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, quoting from Ovid the emblem of the October eclogue, "*Est deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo*," and also Spenser's lines,

Then make thee wings of thine aspiring wit,  
And, whence thou camest, fly back to heaven apace.<sup>17</sup>

Puttenham asserts as a strong probability that "this science in his perfection cannot grow but by some divine instinct—the Platonics call it *furor*."<sup>18</sup> Poets of old were the revealers of the "high mysteries of the gods." Being the "first observers of all natural causes and effects in the things generable and corruptible," they "from thence mounted up to search after the celestial courses and influences, and yet penetrated further to know the divine essences and substances separate." They became the "first priests and ministers of the holy mysteries. And because for the better execution of that high charge and function it behooved them to live chaste, and in all holiness of life,"<sup>19</sup> and in continual study and contemplation, they came by instinct divine, and by deep

<sup>16</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 231.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 232. Meres is impressed by the idea and copies the passage from Webbe in his *Palladis Tamia* (Smith, ii, 313). Allot also quotes the verses in *England's Parnassus* under "Poetry."

<sup>18</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Cp. Drayton (Ode I, "To Himself and the Harp"):

Apollo and the Nine  
Forbid no man their shrine,  
That cometh with hands pure;  
Else they be so divine  
They will not him endure.

Jonson, contemplating the high "offices and functions of a poet . . . interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine no less than human", remarks on the "impossibility of any man's being the good poet, without first being a good man" (Ded. *Volpone*).

meditation, and much abstinence (the same as subtiling and refining their spirits) to be made apt to receive visions, both waking and sleeping, which made them utter prophecies and foretell things to come." Thus, by plain and holy living and high thinking poets were exalted to a state fit to receive divine inspiration by which they were constrained to express noble and lofty thoughts and feelings in "a manner of utterance . . . . of extraordinary phrase . . . . above all others sweet and civil." All honor, therefore—and no "scorn or indignity"—is due such a "noble, profitable, and divine a science as poesy."<sup>20</sup>

Sir John Harington, harboring resentment against Puttenham for his imputation that translators are but versifiers, declares with some scorn for the latter's critical treatise that he will not trouble "to dispute how high and supernatural the name of a maker is,"<sup>21</sup> though he agrees with Sidney that poetry "is a gift and not an art," as he mischievously finds demonstrated by the poetical attempts of Puttenham, who laboring to make poetry an art "sheweth himself so slender a gift in it."<sup>22</sup> Harington's comparative indifference toward supernaturalism and divine inspiration in poetry, however, is not due entirely to his pique against Puttenham, for though he shows great respect for Sidney's *Apology*, from which he frequently borrows, he is not wholly in accord with the latter's exalted conception of poetry. He "cannot deny . . . . in respect of the high end of all, which is the health of our souls," that poetry is "in a manner vain and superfluous." On the other hand, however, he finds that as a sort of popular philosophy and divinity it serves well as introductory to the more "deep and profound study" of the "high mysteries of our salvation"; and he concludes that for a young man there is no better study than poesy, "specially heroical poesy, that with her sweet stateliness doth erect the mind and lift it up to the consideration of the highest matters."<sup>23</sup>

The slightly skeptical attitude expressed by Harington, colored somewhat by his grudge against Puttenham, is unusual among the critics

<sup>20</sup> Smith, ii, 7, 9, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Even scoffers of poetry, it seems, accepted the "fury" idea, though deprecating effects. Francis Davison challenges such in the title of his miscellany, *A Poetical Rhapsody*, and writes in his preface that if they "affirm that it doth intoxicate the brain and make men utterly unfit, either for more serious studies, or for any active course of life, I only say *Jubeo te stultum esse libenter*" (ed. Bullen, i, 4).

<sup>22</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 196, 197.

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.*, 197, 198.

and poets, who in general hold zealously to the exalted conception embodied in the theory of divine inspiration,—that

Like Pegasus, a poet must have wings  
To fly to heaven, or where him liketh best;  
He must have knowledge of eternal things;  
Almighty Jove must harbor in his breast.<sup>24</sup>

“Lay chronigraphers,” says Nash, “want the wings of choice words to fly to heaven, which we have. . . . Poetry is the honey of all flowers, the quintessence of all sciences, the marrow of wit and the phrase of angels.”<sup>25</sup> He accounts poetry “a more hidden and divine kind of philosophy,”<sup>26</sup> and writing in scriptural tone he declares that “none come so near God in wit, none more condemn the world . . . . despised they are of the world because they are not of the world . . . . happy, thrice happy are they whom God hath doubled his spirit upon and given a double soul unto to be poets.”<sup>27</sup> Drayton observes that the works of Gascoigne and Churchyard, “accounted . . . . great meterers many a day,” “have buried been,” because the authors were “not inspired with brave fire.”<sup>28</sup> In his *England's Heroical Epistles* he causes Surrey to say:

When heaven would strive to do the best it can,  
And put an angel's spirit into a man,  
The utmost power in that great work doth spend,  
When to the world a poet it doth intend.

Chapman, in the Epistle Dedicatory prefixed to his translation of the *Odyssey*, enthusiastically confirms the doctrine of poetic rage and in general highly exalts poetry, declaring in the preface to his *Iliad* that Homer's poems are superior to those of Virgil in that they “were writ from a free fury, an absolute full soul, Virgil's out of a courtly, laborious, and altogether imitatory spirit.”<sup>29</sup> Campion asserts that poetry has

<sup>24</sup> *Mirror for Magistrates*, quoted in *England's Parnassus* under “Poets”. The orthodox view is further expressed in the “sacred poesies” of the *Parnassus* in verses that Allot quotes from Drayton. The Muses

teach such as at poesy repine,  
That it is only heavenly and divine.

<sup>25</sup> *Pierce Penniless*, *Works*, McKerrow, i, 194.

<sup>26</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 328.

<sup>27</sup> *Jack Wilton*, *Works*, ii, 242.

<sup>28</sup> *Of Poets and Poesy*; see *Cambridge History*, iii, 228.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, ii, 298.

the effect of "raising the mind to a more high and lofty conceit";<sup>30</sup> and William Vaughan exhorts that "poetry itself ought to be made much of as a precious jewel and a divine gift."<sup>31</sup> Daniel in his *Defense of Rime* stands forth "to defend the sacred monuments . . . wherein so many honorable spirits have sacrificed to memory their dearest passions, showing by what divine influences they have been moved."<sup>32</sup> The mode of expression of the passionate activity of the imagination is also subject, Daniel thinks, to these divine influences; for "by the divine power of the spirit" all may be "wrought into an orb of order and form." By means of "that mystery rime," he declares, "an eminent spirit" is afforded "wings to mount . . . as it were beyond his power to a far happier flight";<sup>33</sup> and in his *Musophilus* he writes,

And as for poesy . . . .  
 What should I say? since it is well approved  
 The speech of heaven, with whom they have commerce;  
 That only seem out of themselves removed,  
 And do with more than human skills converse.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 327. Cp. Bacon ("Of Adversity"): "In poesy where transcendencies are more allowed".

<sup>31</sup> *Golden Grove*, Smith, ii, 326.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, ii, 381.

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*, 265, 366.

<sup>34</sup> *Works*, i, 256. Another passage from *Musophilus*, extolling

Those numbers wherewith heaven and earth are moved,

further expresses Daniel's lofty enthusiasm for the "speech of heaven":

O blessed Letters, that combine in one  
 All ages past, and make one live in all!  
 By you do we confer with who are gone,  
 And the dead-living into council call;  
 By you the unborn shall have communion  
 Of what we feel and what doth us befall.

The general exaltation of poetry is voiced by Ben Jonson, who in the original quarto edition of *Every Man in His Humor* (V, i) gives through his character Lorenzo junior a Spenser-like rhapsody in laudation of his art:

I can refell opinion, and approve  
 The state of poesy, such as it is,  
 Blessed, eternal, and most true divine . . . .  
 Crowned with the rich traditions of a soul,  
 That hates to have her dignity profaned  
 With any relish of an earthly thought,

All this ardent, worshipful promulgation of the loftiness and divinely mysterious beauty and force of poetry is a very interesting and significant expression of the spirit of the age and eminently in accord with its romantic enthusiasm, its love of beauty, its chivalry and idealism, as well as with its strong religious zeal,—and in short with its general disposition to rise above itself. Indeed, it would be difficult to point out a more happy fusion of the two great forces of renaissance and reformation than

Oh then how proud a presence doth she bear!  
Then she is like herself, fit to be seen  
Of none but grave and consecrated eyes.

A similar encomium he puts into the mouth of Ovid in his *Poetaster* (I, ii):

O sacred poesy, thou spirit of arts,  
The soul of science, and the queen of souls,  
What profane violence, almost sacrilege,  
Hath been offered thy divinities . . . . .  
When, would men learn but to distinguish spirits,  
And set true difference twixt those jaded wits  
That run a broken pace for common hire,  
And the high raptures of a happy soul,  
Borne on the wings of her immortal thought,  
That kicks at earth with a disdainful heel,  
And beats at heaven gates with her bright hooves . . . . .  
They would admire bright knowledge, and their minds  
Should ne'er descend on so unworthy objects  
As gold or titles.

Jonson's acceptance of the idea of "poetical rapture" is further evinced in his *Discoveries* (Schelling, pp. 75, 76). After quoting Aristotle,—"*Nec potest grande aliquid, et supra caeteros loqui, nisi mota mens*,"—he adds, "then it riseth higher, as by a divine instinct, when it contemns common and known conceptions. It utters somewhat above a mortal mouth". He also cites Seneca and Plato, quotes from Ovid, "*Est deus in nobis*" etc., and from Lipsius, "*scio poetam neminem praestantem fuisse, sine parte quadam uberiore divinae aurae*," declaring, "hence it is that the coming up of good poets . . . . is so thin and rare among us . . . . *solus rex, aut poeta, non quotannis nascitur*."

Bacon also endorses the idea that in poetry is to be found inspired idealization. The foundation of narrative or heroic poetry, he affirms, "is truly noble, and has a special relation to the dignity of human nature". Further, "poesy conduces not only to delight, but also to magnanimity and morality. Whence it may be fairly thought to partake somewhat of a divine nature; because it raises the mind and carries it aloft, accommodating the shows of things to the desires of the mind" (*De Augmentis*, Bk. II, chap. xiii).

In Milton's opinion "poetry is a gift granted by God only to a few in every nation" (Spingarn, *Lit. Crit.*, p. 280).

this idealistic exaltation of the art which was held most adequately to give expression to the noblest ideals of beauty and moral excellence. To the Anglo-Saxon love of virtue had been added the southern love of beauty and the fusion of these two forces in the inspirational idealism of poetry was a consummation (pre-puritan) highly expressive of the literary spirit of this age of song.

To the critics and poets of the time the idea of the exalted and essentially divine nature of poetry was evidently peculiarly acceptable. It recommended itself to them not only because of its accord with their thought and feeling, but also because of the possibility of its practical influence in the advancement of national poetic art. Poetry as a "gift divine," the result of celestial inspiration, indubitably could be vouchsafed only to the elect, to a few eminent spirits who would not abuse and disgrace the art. Such a conception of poetry, it was felt, ought to attract to the art the noblest spirits and deter unworthy practitioners, who, not realizing its superior and exalted character, rashly degraded it. By establishing a reverential attitude toward the art it might be saved from the vulgar familiarity that threatened its demoralization. The ardent advocacy in Elizabethan days of the transcendent nature of poetry should therefore not be lightly dismissed as "pretty Platonizings" and "unpractical aberrations"; for the lofty ideals evidently held with sincerity by these men were promulgated and emphasized for the very practical purpose of saving and advancing English poetry.

Moreover, the idea of the exalted nature of poetry is strongly reflected in the tone and spirit of Elizabethan poetry itself, poets even sometimes showing as they write consciousness of being possessed of the heavenly fury—though Carlyle would say this "consciousness" was not best. Spenser is "rapt with the rage" of his "ravisht thought." Marlowe, scorning the "jigging veins of riming mother wits," rises above them into a state to make his Scythian Tamburlaine threaten "the world with high astounding terms." Indeed, the transcendental feeling toward poetry,

this music of the soul,  
The fairest child that ere the soul brought forth,<sup>35</sup>

helps to explain the paradox that often men of this age, living like demons, write like angels,—as Marlowe, traditionally, with

<sup>35</sup> *Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, Act V, ll. 534-5.

Wit lent from heaven, but vices sent from hell.<sup>36</sup>

To men of letters of these "spacious days," poetry is as a benign goddess under whose gracious influence poetic spirits are exalted above their ordinary selves into a state "passing the reach of common reason," wherein, as they distill the "heavenly quintessence" "from their immortal flowers of poesy," they attain "the highest reaches of a human wit."<sup>37</sup> In youthful exaltation godlike spirits with faith in their inspiration yield themselves up to transports of thought and emotion, perceiving and setting forth beauty and truth beyond ordinary apprehension. "Rapt in the divine" the poet is constrained to pour forth in noble utterance the sacred mysteries that awaken and refine the human heart and understanding. Assuredly inspiration and the power and delight of imagination were in the days of Elizabeth matters of faith and experience; and the lofty idealism centering about poetry was, as is everywhere palpably evident, a potent force in creative art as well as in criticism. There is always a counter-tide to any great force in life or nature; and the so-called Elizabethan distrust of the imagination may be regarded as evidence that bears further witness to the fact that with the best poets and critics of this period the imagination was exalted, trusted, and used as, perhaps, in no other period of English poetry.

## II. MATTER AND FORM—RELATIVE IMPORTANCE

Although the critics of this period devote much attention to matters of poetic form and sometimes consider the form or style as well as the content to be a result of divine inspiration, they are generally agreed in theory as to the superior importance of content or of the values that lie back of outward expression. Their theory, assuming poetry to be produced by inspiration and the free play of genius rather than by rule, "a gift rather than an art," in the main subordinates the more material aspect of form to the moral and spiritual values of content. With the aim of advancing poetic art, much attention to be sure is given to such matters as versification, but repeatedly occurs the qualification that versifying does not make poetry. Moreover, there is often evident the feeling that poetry may be somewhat protected from the ravages of the

<sup>36</sup> *Return from Parnassus*, Act I, sc. ii. Cp. Daniel's lines quoted by Wordsworth in *The Excursion* (Bk. IV, ll. 330-1):

Unless himself above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man.

<sup>37</sup> Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, Act V, sc. ii.

versifiers by fitly placing the emphasis on its more unattainable aspects. Much space, it is true, is devoted by some of the critics to discussion of the various kinds and forms of poetry, but it should be observed that in such cases attention is usually centered chiefly upon the character of the subject-matter and upon its purposes and effects rather than upon the outward form, which itself is regarded as subordinate and determined by the nature of the subject-matter treated. Often, therefore, discussions ostensibly of forms are essentially discussions of different kinds of subjects and purposes therein involved—attempts to show the various applications of poetry to life and conduct,—content taking precedence over execution, matter over manner. Many writers, too, down through the period, express themselves decidedly against the ever menacing narrow and mechanical views of poetry that tend to degrade the art by over-emphasizing superficialities.

Sir Thomas Elyot had expressed the opinion in his *Governor* that "who that hath nothing but language only may be no more praised than a popinjay, a pie, or a stare, when they speak featly"; and "that they be much abused that suppose eloquence to be only in words or colors of rhetoric, for, as Tully saith, what is so furious or mad a thing as a vain sound of words of the best sort and most ornate, containing neither cunning nor sentence." He had also accepted the idea of "ancient writers" that "they that make verses, expressing thereby none other learning but the craft of versifying, be not . . . named poets, but only called versifiers."<sup>1</sup> This view, a familiar one to Elizabethan critics, is usually supported even by those who devote their attention mainly to matters of form. Gascoigne, for instance, although writing with the express purpose of giving instructions in verse making, deprecates rime without reason and at the outset takes pains to insist that the essential and fundamental consideration in producing poetry is invention, his own opinion coinciding with that of Ronsard and others,—“the first and most necessary point,” he declares, “that ever I found to be considered in making of a delectable poem is this, to ground it upon some fine invention.” This point, though “hardest to be prescribed,” is “most to be marked”; and Gascoigne exhorts the poet to “stand most upon the excellency” of his invention and to “take heed that neither pleasure of rime nor variety of device” carry him from it. He believes, as later did Wordsworth, that “it is not enough to roll in pleasant words . . . nor

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Croft, i, 116, 120.

yet to abound in apt vocables or epithets."<sup>2</sup> The outward vesture or style must always be subordinated and ruled by the more important groundwork of thought.

Lodge also makes substance rather than style the determining element, declaring of the writings of poets that "when their matter is most heavenly their style is most lofty," and agreeing with Lactantius that "if we weigh poets' words and not their meaning, our learning in them will be very mean."<sup>3</sup> He commends Spenser as having "the palm for deep invention won"<sup>4</sup> rather than for stylistic features. Nash likewise extols Spenser, "the miracle of wit," for his "deep conceit,"<sup>5</sup> on the ground of which he will challenge the world—and this was before the publication of the *Faery Queen*. Others praise the poet for similar merits; Meres, for instance, speaking for his age, asserts that Spenser is "honored for fine poetical invention and most exquisite wit."<sup>6</sup> It has been remarked by modern critics that the *Shepherd's Calendar* represents the young poet's experimentation in various forms and styles of verse, his interest being primarily artistic. It should be noted, however, that Spenser is here putting into practice the critical theory of himself and others of his time that various kinds of subject-matter demand corres-

<sup>2</sup> *Notes of Instruction*, Smith, i, 47, 48. Harvey is impressed with these ideas and comments in the margin of Gascoigne's *Notes*, "A pithy rule in Sir Philip's *Apology for Poetry*. The invention must guide and rule the elocution: *non contra*" (Smith, i, 360, note). Ben Jonson finds "divine poesy" "half starved for want of her peculiar food, sacred invention". Though deprecating "obstinate contemnners" of art, "presumers on their own naturals" (Pref. *Alchemist*, ed. 1612), he puts "matter above words" (Prol. *Cynthia's Revels*), and in his *Poetaster* (V, i) makes Virgil say, "Let your matter run before your words".

<sup>3</sup> Smith, i, 72, 73. Cf. J. P. Hoskins: "Form . . . is determined by the emotional element in consciousness" (*Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, Sept., 1910). "Arcadianism is an emotional medium for the expression of lofty and heroic thought," observes F. E. Schelling (*Literature during the Lifetime of Shakespeare*, p. 43).

<sup>4</sup> *Phillis*, Moulton's *Library of Criticism*, i, 392.

<sup>5</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 318.

<sup>6</sup> *Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 316. Cp. Richard Barnfield's couplet from *A Remembrance of Some English Poets*:

Live Spenser ever, in thy Faery Queen,  
Whose like for deep conceit was never seen,

Also,

Spenser, to me whose deep conceit is such,  
As, passing all conceit, needs no defense.

—*English Scholars' Library*, No. 14, pp. 118, 119.

ponding variations of form and style, the subject-matter dominating and determining the style, which stands as an attempt to adapt outer raiment fittingly to inner beauty and significance, and which derives importance especially with reference to its adequacy as a symbol or embodiment of content. Spenser, himself, like Sidney, is irritated at the mechanical and superficial ideals of poetry manifested in the writings of the "base vulgar" who pollute and degrade her hidden mystery.

Heaps of huge words uphoarded hideously,  
With horrid sound though having little sense,  
They think to be chief praise of poetry.<sup>7</sup>

He would have men realize if possible that poetry is "a gift divine" not to be acquired by art alone, real superiority being based upon the merits of the underlying thought and spirit. Indeed, the fundamental consideration with him as with Sidney is spiritual content, psychical significance, form being regarded as an external manifestation of inner beauty. The whole view is summed up in the line from his *Hymn in Honor of Beauty*:

Soul is form and doth the body make.

The philosophy of poetry that disposes Sidney to place matter above form is consciously applied to the poetry of his day including his own.<sup>8</sup> One of the main purposes of his *Apology* is to dispel the illusion prevailing among contemporary poet-apes that versifying makes a poet. Though "art, imitation, and exercise" are necessary, these will not avail without poetic genius—"a poet no industry can make, if his own genius be not carried unto it . . . . *poeta nascitur*."<sup>9</sup> Poetry is not merely a mode of

<sup>7</sup> *Tears of the Muses*, l. 553. Courthope says (*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 252): "Spenser . . . saw that the metrical experiments both of the classical revivalists and of the letter-hunters were rendered nugatory by lack of matter, and that, if he was to give his art the extension and the refinement which he contemplated, he must appear at least to have something particular to say . . . and E. K., summarizing the merits of his eclogues, lays stress on the excellence of their thought."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Astrophel and Stella*, I and XV. Schelling remarks: "It was one of the prime theories of Sidney that it was spirit and not form which made poetry. . . . In view of such ideas we must expect to find a close relation in Sidney's *Arcadia* between subject-matter and the form of expression" (*op. cit.*, pp. 42-43).

<sup>9</sup> Smith, i, 195. Daniel concurs with this, but finds that many poets were born in Eliza's time, as he notes in lines "to the Prince" (Ded. *Philotas*, 1605) at the beginning of the next reign:

expression; its basis lies deeper in thought and feeling. Repeatedly Sidney insists that "it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet"; no more does this make a poet "than a long gown maketh an advocate, who though he pleadeth in armor should be an advocate and no soldier." In his subordination of form Sidney goes so far as to deny the requisite-ness of verse at all: "One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry."<sup>10</sup> Poets to be sure have usually "appareled their poetical inventions in that numbrous kind of writing which is called verse: indeed but appareled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, sith there hath been many most excellent poets that have never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets."<sup>11</sup> To prove the spuriousness of much of the so-called poetry of the time "let but most of the verses be put in prose, and then ask the meaning; and it will be found that one verse did but beget another," and all is but "a confused mass of words, with a tingling sound of rime, barely accompanied with reason."<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with his conception of the high nature of poetry and of the essential dominance of its inner content, Sidney consistently repro-

---

'Tis not in the power of kings to raise  
A spirit for verse that is not born thereto,  
For late Eliza's reign gave birth to more  
Than all the kings of England did before.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 160, 182. Cp. Bacon: "Poesy is . . . . extremely licensed, and doth refer to the imagination . . . . It is taken in two senses in respect of words or matter. In the first sense it is but a character of style, and belongeth to the arts of speech . . . . In the latter it is . . . . one of the principal portions of learning, and is nothing else but feigned history, which may be styled as well in prose as in verse" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, IV, 1). Shelley in his *Defense of Poetry* says: "It is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony, which is the spirit, be observed . . . . The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. . . . Plato was essentially a poet — the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive."

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 159-160. Sir John Harington, with caustic reference to Puttenham's numerous figures, agrees with Sidney that poetry "is a gift and not an art" and that verse is "the clothing or ornament". Upon the verse, however, "weaker capacities", unable to apprehend the more essential and profitable part of poetry, the content, may feed themselves, though it is to be deplored that people, especially "of the common sort . . . . term all that is written in verse poetry" (Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, i, 197, 203).

<sup>12</sup> *Ib.*, 196.

bates the conventions and artificial extravagances of style to be found in the poetry of his day. He speaks of poetic diction even in its normal aspect as but "the outside of it"; and in view of the superficial affectations of "such writings as come under the banner of irresistible love," he declares that poets "miss the right use of the material point of poesy."<sup>13</sup> In composing his own sonnets he does not forget his ideals nor his detestation of the shallow conventionalism that besets poetic art.

You that do search for every purling spring  
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows,  
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows  
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring . . . .  
You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes  
With new-born signs and denizen'd wit do sing;  
You take wrong ways; those far-fet helps be such  
As do bewray a want of inward touch.<sup>14</sup>

This "want of inward touch," which Sidney finds in much of the poetry of his time in consequence of the apish imitation of poetic fashions and conventions, he himself endeavors to avoid, experiencing, however, as is indicated in his introductory sonnet, something of a conflict between his own poetic ideals and the temptation to follow the ways of the poet-ape. "Studying inventions fine," he writes, and "oft turning others' leaves,"

Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows;  
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.  
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,  
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite;  
'Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 201.

<sup>14</sup> *Astrophel and Stella*, XV. Cp. Burns:

Give me ae spark o' Nature's fire,  
That's a' the learnin I desire . . . .  
My Muse, though hamely in attire,  
May touch the heart.

Ben Jonson (*Discoveries*, p. 49), speaking of "poetry and picture," says: "They both are born artificers, not made. Nature is more powerful in them than study".

<sup>15</sup> *Ib.*, I. Cp. Shakespeare, who causes the poet in *Timon of Athens* (I, i, 20) to say:

A thing slipped idly from me.  
Our poesy is as a gum, which oozes

Indeed Sidney's own excuse for writing poetry is doubtless one that he would deem necessary from anyone who ventured to enter the field: "Only over-mastered by some thoughts, I yielded an inky tribute unto them."<sup>16</sup>

Sidney's emphasis upon the spiritual content of poetry, then, due to his general conception of the high nature and function of the art, is evidently heightened by the feeling that the art is abused in consequence of the narrow and unworthy conception that makes it merely a matter of form. The writer whose conception is such that he uses "art to shew art . . . . flyeth from nature, and indeed abuseth art."<sup>17</sup> Ridiculous conventions and affectations of style—or as Spenser says, "heaps of huge words uphoarded hideously"—are due largely to the fact that men wanting the essential "inward touch," lacking the necessary breadth of thought and depth of feeling, miss the whole point of the nature and significance of poetry, failing to see that "soul is form" and that without a soul working in noble thought and emotion art is vain.

King James VI of Scotland, who in his *Short Treatise* is indebted to Gascoigne's *Notes of Instruction*, agrees with the latter as to the pre-eminence of invention. Although his sonnet<sup>18</sup> describing the "perfect poet" manifests a rather technical view, in his *Treatise* he discourages conventional imitation, insisting that "invention . . . . is one of the chief properties of a poet" and that "ye cannot have the invention except it come of nature." Nature, moreover, he regards "as the chief cause not only of invention but also of all the other parts of poesy. For art is only but a help and remembrance to nature."<sup>19</sup> In his preface he expresses the wish that his docile reader, before cumbering himself with reading the rules, may have found in himself such a beginning of nature as to be able to put in practice in verse many of the precepts without having seen them "as they are here set down. For if nature be not the chief worker in this art, rules will be but a band to nature." He lays further stress upon this point in a sonnet to the reader in the last two lines of which he exhorts,

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From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i' the flint  
Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame  
Provokes itself, and, like the current, flies  
Each bound it chafes.

<sup>16</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 195.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 203.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, i, 211.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, 220, 221.

Then reidar sie of nature thou have pairt,  
 Syne laikis thou nocht bot heir to reid the airt.<sup>20</sup>

Webbe, who is himself less of a poet than almost any other critic of the period and who is an admirer of Euphuism and an advocate of classical metres, naturally enough has a comparatively mechanical conception of poetry, as is evident in his attempt to define the art. Although he states that poetry "may properly be defined the art of making," he does not seem to attach to the term "making" the usual sense of inspired creative faculty, for in enlarging his definition he declares that "English poetry . . . . is where any work is learnedly compiled in measurable speech, and framed in words containing number or proportion of just syllables, delighting the readers or hearers as well by apt and decent framing of words in equal resemblance of quantity, commonly called verse, as by skillful handling of the matter whereof it is intreated."<sup>21</sup> In the work of the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, which he genuinely admires, Webbe recognizes poetry to be a "rare gift"; though, unlike Sidney, he is also charmed by the "singular eloquence and brave composition" of Master John Lyly, and in general is prone to fasten his attention upon "glorious ornaments," or what Sidney calls the "outside of it." His exposition, however, of the different kinds of poetry, like that of Puttenham, has to do with the nature and purposes of the subject-matter peculiar to each kind rather than with form or technic. Making the explicit divisions of "matter" and "form," he treats under "matter," epic, eclogue, georgic, etc., discussing the characteristic subject-matter of each. Then with the remark, "Concerning the matter of our English writers let this suffice," he turns to "form, that is, the manner of our verse," which he discusses independently, without relation to kinds. That is to say, Webbe, like other critics of the time, in dealing with kinds is in reality dealing with content. This fact should subtract from the supposed dominance of interest in technic in such critical writings of this period as those of Webbe and Puttenham. Their "forms"

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.*, 211. Cf. "All art is learned by art, this art alone it is a heavenly gift" (*England's Parnassus*, quoting King of Scots). Cp. Chapman, who, writing of the failure of previous translators of Homer, in lines prefixed to his own translation, finds in nature rather than in art the key to success in poetry.

They failed to search his deep and treasurous heart.  
 The cause was since they wanted the fit key  
 Of nature, in their downright strength of art,  
 With poesy to open poesy.

<sup>21</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 247-8.

and "kinds" are often simply divisions or heads for the discussions of subject-matter and the involved interests and values.

Puttenham, though dealing avowedly with the "art" of poetry and of all the critics devoting most attention to ornament and to forms and kinds, nevertheless in his poetical theory exalts "natural instinct" above "art and precepts."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the dominance of matter over form is recognized in his fundamental doctrine, that of decorum, for by this the form or style should be "according to the matter and subject of the writer . . . . and conformable thereunto."<sup>23</sup> This attitude is manifested throughout his extensive treatment of poetic kinds. In the twenty chapters of his first book that are devoted to the different kinds of poetry, he is mainly interested in subject-matter or content, for in his estimation it is the subject-matter that determines or gives rise to the form, there being nothing else in some cases—except a suitable general conformity of style—to make the differentiation. Puttenham, therefore, though ostensibly dealing with forms, really classifies under his heads for forms various social and psychic manifestations, such, for instance, as the commendation of virtue, the reprehension of vice, and different kinds of lamentations and rejoicings, and discusses these matters with interest centered in the moral and social values involved rather than in the technic or artistry of the forms designated by his headings.

Moreover, notwithstanding his elaborate treatment of ornament and the astonishing outfit of figures that he places at the disposal of English poets, Puttenham in his poetic theory insistently exalts nature above art. At the end of his presentation of figures he lays stress upon the point that all are only "such as without any art at all we should use, and commonly do, even by very nature without discipline."<sup>24</sup> Figures are indebted to nature herself for their existence and in general the studied devices of literature are "a repetition or reminiscence natural"—even rime came "by instinct of nature, which was before art and observation."<sup>25</sup> The devices of art, which often smack of "scholarly affectation," should not be obtruded, and if a poet uses art he should so conceal it that it may not "seem to proceed from him by any study or trade of rules, but to be his natural."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, a poet is "most admired when

<sup>22</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 190.

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.*, 154.

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, 182.

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*, 187.

he is most natural and least artificial," and is to "be more commended for his natural eloquence than for his artificial." Although it is "better to see with spectacles than not to see at all, yet is their praise not equal nor in any man's judgment comparable: no more is that which a poet makes by art and precepts rather than by natural instinct, and that which he doth by long meditation rather than by a sudden inspiration, or with great pleasure and facility than hardly and (as they are wont to say) in spite of nature and Minerva, than which nothing can be more irksome or ridiculous."<sup>27</sup>

Aside from Puttenham's subordination of form in his doctrine of decorum and his idea that style is the man,<sup>28</sup> the reason why, though ostensibly a formalist, he insists in theory upon the predominance of matter and the ascendancy of nature over art is doubtless to be found in his general conception of the function of poetry. From his statement that the subject-matter of poetry may be anything "for any necessary use of the present time, or good instruction of posterity,"<sup>29</sup> and from his

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*, 190. Cp. Ben Jonson (*Discoveries*, pp. 75, 78): "First, we require of our poet or maker . . . a goodness of natural wit, *ingenium*. For, whereas all other arts consist of doctrine and precepts, the poet must be able by nature and instinct to pour out the treasure of his mind". And again, after giving requirements for a poet: "But all this in vain, without a natural wit and a poetical nature in chief". Jonson gives genius and nature first place; though they are not all even in Shakespeare:

Yet must I not give nature all; thy art,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.  
For though the poet's matter nature be,  
His art doth give the fashion; and, that he  
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,  
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same  
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,  
Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn;  
For a good poet's made as well as born.

From gentle Shakespeare we have the profound answer (*Winter's Tale*, IV, iv, 89):

Yet nature is made better by no mean  
But nature makes that mean; so over that art  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes.

Bacon says in his essay "Of Beauty": "A painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity . . . and not by rule".

<sup>28</sup> Smith, ii, 154.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 25.

manner of analysis of the kinds of poetry on the basis of nature of subject-matter treated, it is evident that he did not regard the function of poetry as primarily that of satisfying artistic needs and ideals. Although he is much occupied with ornament and solicitously enjoins decorum of style, he places content first, with its didactic, moral, or emotional purposes and influences and in general its bearings with reference to human life and conduct. He is earnestly desirous by means of his "whole receipt of poetry" of contributing toward the formal perfection of courtly making, but as a "gentleman of the Court" he would not have rules and receipts made obtrusive in poetic composition. The courtly maker, though he must attend to the more formal part of poetry, the technic, must affect to neglect it, as Lord Byron did. His poetry should be elegant like his manners, but likewise all must be done with seeming ease and offhand freedom and without sign of slavish adherence to rule. Art should be natural and unaffected, for than the obtrusion of labored art "nothing can be more irksome or ridiculous." Let the poet then put his faith first in natural instinct and inspiration, trust first in nature and thereto adapt his form, for form must not only seem natural, it must be genuinely based upon the spirit and truth of nature.

Daniel, like Sidney, is keenly alive to the baneful influence of the narrow-minded view that, limiting itself to external aspects, conceives poetry merely as a matter of outward form. "It is matter that satisfies the judicial," he asserts in refutation of Campion's attitude, and "all these pretended proportions of words, howsoever placed, can be but words,"<sup>30</sup> and peradventure serve but to embroil our understanding"; seeking to please "an exterior sense" we only "enthrall our judgment." We should not in servile blindness imitate the ancients, whom "we admire . . . not for their smooth-gliding words, nor their measures,

<sup>30</sup> Cp. Bacon: "Substance of matter is better than beauty of words" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. I, iv, 5). And Juliet to Romeo (II, vi, 30):

Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,  
Braggs of his substance, not of ornament.

"More matter with less art", says the Queen to Polonius (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 95). Cp. also Shakespeare's sonnet xxxii:

Reserve them for their love, not for their rime . . . . .  
Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love —

and lxxxv:

I think good thoughts, whilst others write good words . . . . .  
Then others for the breath of words respect,  
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

but for their inventions." "Laborsome curiosity"—of the Campion type of mind—he continues impatiently, must lay affliction "upon our least delights . . . . as if art were ordained to afflict nature, and that we could not go but in fetters." We must wrap ourselves "in unnecessary intrications . . . . laboring ever to seem more than we are," and lay upon ourselves useless burdens, "because we would not appear like other men."<sup>31</sup> Here Daniel, in the spirit of Sidney, seeks to expose the fallacy of attempting to elevate poetry and give it distinction by superficial devices of form and manner rather than by superiority of intellectual and spiritual content; and indeed, evinces in his consciously rebellious attitude an independent, democratic spirit toward art strikingly similar to that shown two centuries later by Wordsworth.

But though Daniel insists on the dominance of invention and content, and is convinced that the imposition of the bonds of classical forms upon a language to which they are not adapted would be highly pernicious, yet he deems that forms themselves do not necessarily clog the spirit in the process of poetical expression. Rather there may be a happy relation whereby the form may afford added inspiration. The "multiplicity of rimes . . . . used by many in sonnets," with some, "far from hindering their inventions . . . . hath begot conceit beyond expectation . . . . for sure in an eminent spirit, whom nature hath fitted for that mystery, rime is no impediment to his conceit, but rather gives him wings to mount, and carries him not out of his course, but as it were beyond his power to a far happier flight." It comports with nature that the "unformed chaos" of the imagination should by the "divine power of the spirit . . . . be wrought into an orb of order and form,"<sup>32</sup> thus giving definite power to the measureless passions of men.

Thus man in his art is putting himself in harmony with nature when he gives to his imaginative poetic creations suitable limits and forms. But forms must not be imposed superficially or allowed to usurp the more essential powers and functions of which they are but external representations. Daniel is so deeply interested in this matter that he enters into its social and political significance. The welfare and stability of society, he maintains, depend not upon the outward garnish of customs and conventions, but upon inherent qualities of virtue and intelligence. He places action above speech, "substance of wit" above "eloquence and gay words"; it is "*mercurium in pectore . . . . not in lingua*" that is

<sup>31</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 364, 365.

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, 365, 366.

- not stimulus  
but part of  
motivation

P

vital.<sup>33</sup> "The most judicial and worthy spirits of this land," he declares, will not be content "to rest upon the outside of words, and be entertained with sound; seeing that both number, measure, and rime is but as the ground or seat, whereupon is raised the work that commends it." The spirit and thought are more than the raiment. "It is not the observing of trochaics nor their iambics that will make our writings aught the wiser. All their poesy . . . is nothing, unless we bring the discerning light of conceit with us to apply it to use."<sup>34</sup> Not blind imitation, but the artist's feeling and judgment with reference to the spirit and thought of a piece of art, must determine the outward expression. No one form, not even rime, should tyrannize over a poet's utterance, and Daniel declares himself free to "serve in any other state of invention, with what weapon of utterance I will: and so it make good my mind, I care not. For I see judgment and discretion (with whatsoever is worthy) carry their own ornaments, and are graced with their own beauties; be they appareled in what fashion they will."<sup>35</sup> Poetry will not profit by "other clothes," by putting "off these fetters to receive others," but rather by having the "music of our times" set "to a higher note of judgment and discretion."<sup>36</sup> The "tyrannical rules of idle rhetoric" should ever give way to the force that sways the "affections of men."<sup>37</sup> And in this force and in the thought substance, rather than in the outward form, Daniel believes, lies mainly the power and significance of poetry.

Authority of powerful censure may  
 Prejudicate the form wherein we mold  
 This matter of our spirit, but if it pay

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*, 371-372. This Wordsworth-like attitude of Daniel and others of his time stands in contrast to that of the age of Pope with its canon of "nature methodized",—

True wit is nature to advantage dressed;  
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, 367, 381.

<sup>35</sup> *Ded. Civil Wars, Works*, ii, 8. In connection with the theory held by Sidney and Daniel that form is not the determining element of poetry, it may be noted that Sidney's *Arcadia* was sometimes spoken of as a poem—for instance, by Milton—and that Drayton found that Daniel's "manner better fitted prose" (*Epistle to Reynolds*).

<sup>36</sup> Smith, ii, 363.

<sup>37</sup> Cp. Marston: "Know rules of art were shaped to pleasure, not pleasure to your rules" (Introd. *What You Will*, 1607). Bacon declares that one of the prime errors of learning "is the over-ready and peremptory reduction of knowledge into arts and methods" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. I, V, 4).

The ear with substance, we have what we would,  
For that is all which must our credit hold.<sup>28</sup>

Although the critics of this period, for the most part working separately and under various influences, lack the homogeneity of thought of a more co-operative body of writers, yet their work attains something of unity from the earnest desire of all to apply to existent conditions the best critical principles for the advancement of English poetry. The treatises of Webbe—an admirer of Euphuism—and Campion, both actuated mainly by the desire to introduce the remedy of classical metres, are largely devoid of a conception of poetry that goes beyond its external form. But in such a limited and superficial view, more thoughtful critics find, lies a reason for the pernicious activity of the very rimesters and poet-apes whom Webbe and Campion, by instituting more difficult metres and forms, would if possible silence. Such critics as Sidney and Spenser—notwithstanding their earlier dabbling in classical forms, soon discredited by their own work of a different order—and Daniel, therefore set themselves most earnestly against conceptions of poetry that tended to make dominant any merely external and imitable aspect of the art, classical, euphuistic, or otherwise; and their work and influence enabled romanticism to run a course of development that otherwise might have been seriously impeded and with great loss to our poetical treasury. Moreover, there is reflected in Puttenham, Sidney, and others the courtly tradition that discredits any obtrusion or labored ostentation of art, for this is deemed tedious and ridiculous. Art should be used “to hide art,” which should never be “undiscreetly bewrayed.” Shakespeare’s “a thing slip’d idly from me” is the ideal, rather than Ben Jonson’s “living line” by the inelegant process of “sweat.”

Practical reasons then and social traditions, perhaps even religious ideals, as well as their more lofty idealization of poetry, impel these critics to emphasize and exalt the intangible and more unattainable elements of the art. They would of course have men of poetic spirit and genius give necessary heed to form—others they would have desist altogether. But deeming that the salvation of poetry must rest first of all upon a recognition of its essentially spiritual nature, they exalt nature above artifice, genius and inspiration—“inward touch”—above rule and studious imitation, matter above form. In accordance with their conception of the lofty nature and function of poetry, they insist that it must not be made a matter of school art, that its merits must not be

<sup>28</sup> “To the Reader”, *Works*, i, 14.

measured chiefly by ornaments, words, rimes, or metres; but rather by its imaginative force, its spiritual nobility, and its larger significance with relation to human life. Even such critics as Gascoigne, King James, and Puttenham, though dealing largely with formal aspects of the art, avow that these must be regarded as essentially subordinate to the more fundamental intellectual and spiritual elements. And in general the critics unite in asserting the supremacy of these elements and the freedom of genius, agreeing with "M. Sidney and all the learned sort" in pronouncing poetry "a gift and not an art,"<sup>29</sup> and thereby with M. Spenser that "soul is form."

### III. POETRY AS FICTION—ALLEGORY, IMITATION

As the soul or content of poetry was deemed a matter of prime importance by most Elizabethan critics, naturally much attention was given to the nature and character of this poetic content. Poetry might be made up of pure fact or history—though few critics agreed to this; or it might be pure fable; or it might be a mixture of fact and fable. In general, it was agreed that poetry should possess a groundwork of fiction of some kind; and the chief problem was to decide what the nature of this fiction should be and to justify its use. The fiction of verisimilitude to everyday life received small attention. Allegorical fiction was expounded and praised by critics of scholastic minds and training whose concrete interest lay chiefly in an interpretation of the poetry of the past. The fiction of romance or idealism, supported mainly by those critics who were most intimately in touch with creative literary activity, receives by far the ablest and most interesting exposition and evokes the most significant part of the critical work of its chief exponent, Sir Philip Sidney.

The allegorical conception of poetry is represented early in the period by Arthur Golding, who in the preface to his translation of Ovid (1567) lays stress upon the idea that the work of his author, "purporting outwardly most pleasant and delectable histories, and fraughted inwardly with most pithy instructions and wholesome examples," contains "dark and secret mysteries" with "most exquisite cunning and deep knowledge."

The readers therefore earnestly admonisht are to be  
To seek a further meaning than the letter gives to see.

<sup>29</sup> Harington, Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 197.

Taking the attitude of translator rather than of creator, Golding emphasizes the importance of interpretation, placing the ethical responsibility largely upon the interpretative attitude of the reader; and, not possessing the conception of creative imitation or fiction later promulgated by Sidney, he limits himself to reiterated admonitions to his readers for the most edifying allegorical interpretations.

Then take these works as fragrant flowers most full of  
 pleasant juice  
 The which the bee conveying home may put to wholesome  
 use:  
 And which the spider sucking on to poison may convert.<sup>1</sup>

Stephen Hawes, though writing earlier than Golding, in a sense shows a step in advance by his application of the idea of allegory to English poetry in the spirit of a creative artist consciously dealing with fiction. Transferring allegory from its former application chiefly to nature, the Scriptures, and classical mythology, he consciously employs it and advocates it as a method of poetic fiction or romance. In his *Pastime of Pleasure*<sup>2</sup> he will enticingly veil his "matter with a misty smoke."

Yet as I may I shall blow out a fume,  
 To hide my mind underneath a fable,  
 By covert colors well and probable.

And Hawes complains because contemporary poets do not do likewise:

But many a one is right well expert  
 In this cunning, but upon authority,  
 They feign no fables pleasant and covert,  
 But spend their time in vainful vanity,  
 Making ballads of fervent amity,  
 As gests and trifles without fruitfulness;  
 Thus all in vain they spend their business.

He further recommends and extols this method of feigning pleasant and

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* (1553) taught that "undoubtedly there is no one tale among all the poets, but under the same is comprehended something that pertaineth either to the amendment of manners, to the knowledge of truth, to the setting forth of nature's work, or else to the understanding of some notable thing done . . . The poets were wise men and wished in heart the redress of things" (Smith, i, xxiv).

<sup>2</sup> *Percy Soc.*, vol. xviii.

profitable fables, and expresses wonder, as did Shakespeare later, at the powers of the imagination in such work:

By imagination  
To draw a matter full facundious,  
Full marvelous is the operation,  
To make of nought, reason sententious,  
Cloaking a truth with color tenebrous;  
For often a fair feigned fable  
A truth appeareth greatly profitable.<sup>3</sup>

In the theory of Hawes, in short, is to be found an enthusiastic advocacy of the application of allegory to English poetry as a method of poetic fiction with a purpose.

Allegory—in addition to its use in homiletics and in the interpretation of the poetry of the ancients—having penetrated the realm of modern fiction, and allegorical fiction having been consciously promulgated as a desirable method to be employed in English poetry, it became less difficult for Elizabethan men of letters, accustomed as they were to allegorical interpretation, to accept fiction as a basis of poetry, especially as there was the authority of Aristotle that fiction in the aspect of ideal imitation is the test of poetry.<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, of course, recognized fiction in the poetry of his contemporaries. But with the Elizabethans one of the chief stumbling blocks in the way of an acceptance of fiction in poetry was that they conventionally regarded classical poetry as history or allegory. With the more thoughtful, however, notably with Sidney, this view, under the authority of Aristotle and under the need of justifying contemporary, poetry gives way to a frank recognition and acceptance of fiction in both ancient and contemporary poetry as an essential element.

Fiction as imitation is supported in the remarks of Ascham. Distinguishing two kinds of imitation, one of which is "to follow . . . the best authors," he speaks of the other as "a fair lively painted picture of the life of every degree of man."<sup>5</sup> Of this latter kind he says

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Bunyan ("Author's Apology", *Pilgrim's Progress*):

Art thou for something rare and profitable?  
Or would'st thou see a truth within a fable? . . .  
Then read my fancies.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Butcher's transl. *Poetics*, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> *Cambridge History*, iii, 332. Saintsbury observes that Ascham here intends "the original *mimesis* of Aristotle".

further: "Imitation is a faculty to express lively and perfectly that example which ye go about to follow. And of itself it is large and wide: for all the works of nature in a manner be examples for art to follow."<sup>6</sup> Here, giving broad scope to imitation, Ascham accepts it as fiction, though his conception, possibly because of his "horror of romance," fails to emphasize the purely imaginative aspect of the ideal imitation so enthusiastically expounded later by Sidney.

Lodge also seems to lack Sidney's conception, though he "must confess with Aristotle that men are greatly delighted with imitation."<sup>7</sup> His mind like that of Golding is bent upon the allegorical interpretation of poetry as applied to the ancient classics, and upon this he stands as one of the chief points of his refutation of Gosson. The latter, still forgetting his instruction at the university as to the interpretation of classical poetry, makes more clear in his *Apology of the School of Abuse* than in his original attack his position toward attempts to employ allegorical fiction in contemporary poetry, declaring that "if they do feign these frantic conceits to resemble somewhat else that they imagine, by speaking of one thing and thinking another, they are dissemblers."<sup>8</sup> Lodge, with Gosson's earlier and less definite remarks in mind, fixes his attention upon ancient rather than modern poetry, and summoning the resources of his scholastic learning in support of the allegorical tradition taught at the university, he exposes Gosson, "a man of the letter," in his unaccountable ignorance of poetic interpretation, as absurdly at variance with "our sagest doctors" in taking it upon himself to "dispraise poetry" when he knows "not what it means." Indeed, in view of the usual allegorical interpretation of Virgil,<sup>9</sup> Ovid, and others, which Gosson ought to have known, Lodge can hardly believe that he is in earnest in an attitude toward poetry that makes frivolous the teachings of the masters at the university and shipwrecks the labors of the students.<sup>10</sup> In further defense of allegorical fiction, Lodge cites numerous authorities, classical and other—among them Lactantius, in quoting whom he affords an interesting instance of the transference of allegorical interpretation from Scripture to poetry, "for if, sayeth he, we

<sup>6</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 5. Cp. *Hamlet* (III, ii, 24): "To hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature".

<sup>7</sup> Smith, i, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Arber, ed., p. 68.

<sup>9</sup> Cp. Stanyhurst (Smith, i, 136): "What deep and rare points of hidden secrets Virgil hath sealed up in his twelve books!"

<sup>10</sup> Smith, i, 66.

examine the Scriptures literally, nothing will seem more false, and if we weigh poets' words and not their meaning, our learning in them will be very mean."<sup>11</sup>

The allegorical interpretation as used by Lodge in defense of poetic fiction, is given comparatively slight attention by Sidney. Sir Philip was evidently not strongly of the allegorical turn of mind and doubtless was repelled by the fantastic absurdities of over-elaborate interpretations. Then, too, his attention was directed to contemporary and future creative art rather than to the interpretation of the poetry of the ancients. Moreover, he was not interested in advocating the application of a method of poetry which he doubtless deemed inadequate for the realization of the high possibilities of the art as he conceived it. Allegory would impose upon poetry something of the limitation the freedom from which gives poetry its chief superiority over other subjects. The poet should possess the liberty by which he "bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter but maketh matter for a conceit." Though not supporting allegory as an essential of poetry, Sidney in his advocacy of fiction recommends it in certain applications. He conjures his reader, for instance, "to believe with Clauserus . . . that it pleaseth the heavenly Deity, by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge," and to believe with himself, "that there are many mysteries contained in poetry, which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused."<sup>12</sup> Though the dark or allegorical way of writing might help to save poetry from the abuse of rude versifiers, an easy form of allegory could be a blessing to the popular reader, for "the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, whereof Esop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers";<sup>13</sup> and the "pastoral poem"—Spenser had written one—"sometimes, under the

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 73. Bunyan, one hundred years after Lodge wrote, when puritanical objection to fiction had grown stronger, in his "Author's Apology" to *Pilgrim's Progress* vigorously defends his allegorical fiction on the ground of its analogy to scriptural method, declaring that "God's laws" were "held forth by types, shadows, and metaphors", that "Holy Writ . . . is everywhere so full of . . . dark figures, allegories," that "the prophets used much by metaphors to set forth truth", and that though his own "dark and cloudy words" are "feigned", "they do but hold the truth, as cabinets inclose the gold".

<sup>12</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 180, 206.

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 167. Cp. Spenser's adoption of the method in his *Mother Hubbard's Tale*.

pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrong doings and patience."<sup>14</sup>

While Sidney regards allegory in some points as a desirable feature of poetry, he finds the essential element of the art to be fiction. Impatient at the lingering middle age credulity that persists in regarding the story or fable as history, and at the confusion and erroneous criticism arising from this and from the old practice of mingling fact and fiction or of presenting fiction as fact, he labors earnestly to set forth the high nature and significance of pure fiction and to establish it as the basis and test of poetry. He feels that for right conceptions of poetic art and for best results, fiction must be frankly accepted as such and nothing else,—“If then a man can arrive at that child’s age to know that the poets’ persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been,<sup>15</sup> they will never give the lie to things not affirmatively but allegorically written.” The real poet does not affirm his fiction to be a matter of history; he “never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes.” If men will but learn to look “for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative groundplot of a profitable invention.”<sup>16</sup>

Sidney goes so far as to make fiction rather than verse the test of poetry and to imply that any significant work of the imagination whether

<sup>14</sup> *Ib.*, 175.

<sup>15</sup> “Every tale was, in the Middle Ages, regarded as a historic example of moral truth” (Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, i, 286). The tradition seems to have persisted in Sidney’s day. Other writers of the time, especially the romantic dramatists, feel constrained to plead for the recognition and exercise of that third part of “man’s understanding” which Bacon finds represented in poetry, namely, the imagination. Dekker, for instance, in the prologue to *Old Fortunatus* places stress on the imaginative powers demanded of the spectators; and Heywood, feeling the limitations of his art, appeals to his audience, in the prologue of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, to aid by using their imagination. The most notable instance of this sort of appeal, of course, is in the chorus parts of Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fifth*. Attempts to stimulate and aid the imagination are also made in *Pericles* and *Winter’s Tale*. Shakespeare, too, with all his wealth of diction, complains in his sonnets and plays of the inadequacy of language to serve the powers of imagination. Sidney, after his noble plea for freedom of imagination in poetry, singularly enough decries this same freedom in dramatic art, though doubtless he deemed the “gross absurdities” of romantic drama neither “what could be” nor “what should be”. Interesting remarks on imaginative freedom and observance of the unities may be found in L. S. Friedland’s “The Dramatic Unities in England” (*Journal of Engl. and Germ. Philol.*, 1911).

<sup>16</sup> Smith, i, 185.

in prose or in verse is poetry.<sup>17</sup> This essence of poetry, fiction, has been drawn upon by historians and philosophers, adding life and force to their works. Herodotus "and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles, which no man could affirm, or, if that be denied me, long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced." It is likewise with Plato, for though the body of his work is philosophy, "the skin as it were and beauty depended most of poetry: for all standeth upon dialogues, wherein he feigneth many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters, that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them."<sup>18</sup> Sidney further supports and illustrates his idea of fiction as the essential element of poetry by citing the "divine narrations" of Jesus, such as that of the prodigal son, "which by the learned divines are thought not to be historical acts, but instructing parables."<sup>19</sup> David's psalms also are to be considered "a divine poem," "principally" because of the manner of "his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical. For what else is . . . his notable prosopopœias, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in his majesty; his telling of the beasts'

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jusserand, *Lit. Hist.*, ii, 366. Cp. Ben Jonson's saying to Drummond (*Conv. Works*, iii, 472), "That he thought not Barts a poet, but a verser, because he wrote not fiction"; and also his declaration in the *Discoveries* (Schelling, p. 73), "A poet, *poeta*, is . . . a maker, or feigner; his art, an art of imitation or feigning. . . . Hence he is called a poet, not he which writeth in measure only, but that feigneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like truth; for the fable and fiction is, as it were, the form and soul of any poetical work or poem". Bacon also makes fiction rather than verse the test of poetry. "Poesy", he declares, "is taken in two senses; in respect of words and matter. In the first sense it is but a character of speech; for verse is only a kind of style and a certain form of elocution, and has nothing to do with the matter; for both true history may be written in verse and feigned history in prose"—but "under the name of poesy, I treat only of feigned history" (*De Augmentis*, Bk. II, chap. xiii). This, of course, is in accordance with his threefold division of human learning with "reference to the three parts of man's understanding . . . history to his memory, poesy to his imagination, and philosophy to his reasoning" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, I, 1).

<sup>18</sup> Smith, i, 152, 153. Cp., "A poet, in painting forth the effects, the motions, the whisperings of the people, which though in disputation one might say were true, yet who will mark them well shall find them taste or a poetical vein, and in that kind are gallantly to be marked: for though perchance they were not so, yet it is enough they might be so" (Sidney—letter to his brother Robert (1580); Smith, i, 384).

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, 167.

joyfulness, and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy?"<sup>20</sup> That is to say, it is poetry by virtue of its being a sort of divine fiction—and it is of interest to note that whereas Lodge transfers the application of allegory from Scripture to poetry, Sidney uses Scripture in support of poetry as fiction or ideal imitation.

Sidney's conception of the fiction or ideal imitation that constitutes poetry is further developed in his discussion of the superiority of poetry over history and philosophy. The reason why poetry is superior to history lies in its greater capability of furnishing ideals and examples that are perfect. History is very inadequate in this respect,—“the historian bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberal (without he will be poetical) of a perfect pattern.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the historian's pattern or example, often representing an exception to general verity, may be misleading or comparatively valueless. He “is so tied, not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine.”<sup>22</sup> The fiction of the poet is more philosophically true to human nature, because it deals “with the universal consideration.” Not hampered by particular facts, the poet “is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable.”<sup>23</sup> He “calleth the sweet muses to inspire into him a good invention; in troth, not laboring to tell you what is, or is not, but what should or should not be.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.*, 155.

<sup>21</sup> *Ib.*, 168. The use of poetry, or “feigned history”, says Bacon, “hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul” (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, iv, 1). The Poet in *Timon of Athens* (I, i, 37) says of the Painter's work:

It tutors nature; artificial strife  
Lives in these touches, livelier than life.

<sup>22</sup> *Ib.*, 164.

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.*, 167, 168. Cp. The Poet in *Timon of Athens* (I, i, 45):

My free drift  
Halts not particularly, but moves itself  
In a wide sea of wax.

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, 185. Cp. Aristotle (Butcher, p. 121): “imitate things as they ought to be”. Bacon speaks of poetry as “extremely free and licensed; and therefore . . . referred to the imagination”,—and declares that “as the sensible world is inferior in dignity to the rational soul, poesy seems to bestow upon human nature those things which history denies it; and to satisfy the mind with the shadow of things when the substance cannot be obtained. For if the matter be attentively considered, a sound argument may be drawn from poesy, to show that there is agreeable to the spirit of

- ideal  
imitation

X

The poet, however, may avail himself of history and frame what Spenser calls a "historical fiction"—for "whatsoever . . . the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet . . . make his own; beautifying it both for further teaching, and more delighting, as it pleaseth him: having all from Dante his heaven to his hell, under the authority of his pen." For "use and learning" the poet's feigned ideal examples are superior to those of the historian—"certainly is more doctrinal the feigned example of Cyrus in Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justine, and the feigned Aeneas in Virgil than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius." Xenophon, indeed, though he "writ in prose," "did imitate so excellently as to give us . . . the portraiture of a just empire under the name of Cyrus" and "made therein an absolute heroical poem." A poet, in short, is to be known by his "feigning notable images."<sup>25</sup>

By virtue of this feigning of notable images or ideal imitation, poetry above all other arts furnishes mankind with the noblest ideals and the most perfect models, even vying with or transcending nature. All other arts have nature for their "principal object" and suffer limitations by being constrained to follow her. Only the poet is free, and, "disdain-

men a more ample greatness, a more perfect order and a more beautiful variety than it can anywhere (since the Fall) find in nature; and therefore, since the acts and events which are the subjects of real history are not of sufficient grandeur to satisfy the human mind, poesy is at hand to feign acts more heroical; since the successes and issues of actions as related in the true history are far from being agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, poesy corrects it, exhibiting events and fortunes as according to merit and the law of providence" (*De Augustis*, Bk. II, chap. xiii. Cp. *Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, iv, 1-2). Sir William Alexander (*Anacrisis*, c. 1634) thinks "that an epic poem should consist altogether of a fiction; that the poet soaring above the course of nature, making the beauty of virtue to invite, and the horror of vice to affright the beholders, may liberally furnish his imaginary man with all the qualities requisite for the accomplishing of a perfect creature, having power to dispose all things at his own pleasure". He deems it "more agreeable with the gravity of a tragedy", however, that it be grounded upon a true history, where the greatness of a known person, urging regard, doth work more powerfully upon the affections." Sidney (Smith, i, 198) declares that "tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history, not bound to follow the story, but having liberty, either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical convenience". Marston (Pref. *Sophonisba*—cp. Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, etc.) remarks, "Know that I have not labored to relate anything as an historian, but to enlarge everything as a poet"; and Dekker (*Lectori, Whore of Babylon*) says, "Know I write as a poet, not as an historian, and that these two do not live under one law". Cp. Shakespeare's practice.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, i, 160, 168, 169.

ing to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature . . . so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not inclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit."<sup>26</sup> A godlike creator, "with the force of a divine breath he bringeth forth things far surpassing her doings." "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done, neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden". And as for man, nature never "brought forth so true a lover as Theagines, so constant a friend as Pilades, so valiant a man as Orlando, so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus, so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas." Nor is this bodying forth of idealized conceptions to be "jestingly conceived" because it is "in imitation or fiction; for any understanding knoweth the skill of the artificer standeth in that Idea or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that Idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them."<sup>27</sup>

By ideal imitation thus to bestow upon mankind perfect examples of beauty and excellence is the high function of poets. The poets who imitated the "inconceivable excellencies of God" were the chief ones "both in antiquity and excellency." Such were David and Solomon and others, David in the psalms creating a "heavenly poesy" wherein is depicted "that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith." These Sidney puts in a class by themselves. A "second kind" comprises those "that deal with matters philosophical"; but because they are "wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject" and are not free in invention, it is to be questioned "whether they properly be poets." The class to which Sidney applies his ideas of imitative fiction in general, "indeed right poets . . .

<sup>26</sup> Cp. *Midsummer-Night's Dream* (V, i, 12):

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, i, 156, 157. Cp. Sidney's own work in his *Arcadia*.

be they which . . . to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be: but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be. These . . . may justly be termed *Vates*." They "do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach"; their work of creative ideal imitation "being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed."<sup>28</sup>

The universal truths of ideal imitation must be bodied forth in concrete images, and herein lies the superiority of poetry over philosophy. The philosopher, "setting down with thorny argument the bare rule" in abstract and general terms, is difficult to understand and does not appeal to the imagination. His abstraction and the historian's example are alike inadequate. The "peerless poet" at once transcends the deficiencies of both: "he coupleth the general notion with the particular example," yielding "to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description."<sup>29</sup> The philosopher's learned definitions lie "dark before the imagination and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy."<sup>30</sup>

By means of the vivid, concrete pictures of his creative imagination, the poet is enabled so to present examples of ideal truth that they must

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, 155, 158, 159.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 164. The process is effectively described in verses by Sir John Davies (quoted by Coleridge, *Biog. Lit.*, chap. xiv):

Thus doth she, when from individual states  
She doth abstract the universal kinds,  
Which then re clothed in divers names and fates  
Steal access thro' our senses to our minds.

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 165. Cp. Dryden: "Neither is it so much the morality of a grave sentence . . . but it is some lively and apt description, dressed in such colors of speech that it sets before your eyes the absent object as perfectly and more delightfully than nature" (Pref. *Annus Mirabilis*). "Imaging," says Dryden again, "is in itself the very height and life of poetry. 'Tis as Longinus describes it, a discourse which, by a kind of enthusiasm, or extraordinary emotion of the soul, makes it seem to us that we behold those things which the poet paints, so as to be pleased with them and admire them" (Pref. *State of Innocence*). Cp. Bunyan ("Author's Apology", *Pilgrim's Progress*):

This book it chalketh out before thine eyes  
The man that seeks the everlasting prize . . . .  
Then read my fancies. They will stick like burrs,  
And may be to the helpless, comforters.

needs "strike, pierce," and "possess the sight of the soul." In a passage that reminds one of Spenser's plan for the *Faery Queen*, Sidney gives a list of heroes in which poets have concretely figured forth various ideals, Ulysses and Diomedes standing for wisdom and temperance, Achilles for valor, Nisus and Eurialus for friendship, Oedipus for "remorse of conscience," Agamemnon for "soon-repenting pride," and so on. And as Spenser found the great "ethic part" of life "so much more profitable and gracious" in "doctrine by example," so does Sidney. The great Alexander, for instance, "well found he received more bravery of mind by the pattern of Achilles than by hearing the definition of fortitude." Indeed, in the speaking pictures of poetry we have "all virtues, vices, and passions so in their own natural seats laid to the view that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them."<sup>31</sup>

The exposition of fiction or ideal imitation as presented in Sidney's *Apology* does not stand in academic disharmony with the poetic practice of himself and Spenser.<sup>32</sup> His *Arcadia*, which according to his own views might be classed as a poem—and was so designated by others,—exemplifies his idea of the free play of the poet's imagination in the realm of the ideal. In accordance with his critical theory, we have in the *Arcadia* a departure from the tradition of allegory and from the former specious linking of fact and fable, resulting in one of the first notable examples in England of pure fiction in the form of romance. To appreciate that "amatorious poem" the readers must have been at least "at that child's age, to know that the poet's persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been."<sup>33</sup> The comments of Sidney's intimate friend Sir Fulke Greville as to the author's motives in the *Arcadia* are strikingly in accord with utterances of the *Apology*. "In all these creatures of his making," says Greville, "his intent and scope was to turn the barren philosophy precepts into pregnant images of life,"—"to limn out such exact pictures of every posture in the mind," that men "might (as in a glass) see how to set a good countenance" upon adversity and the vicissitudes of life in general.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, 166, 189.

<sup>32</sup> Whether or not, as Dr. Grosart conjectured, Spenser's *English Poet* is incorporated in Sidney's *Apology*, the two poet friends are strikingly in accord on many points of critical theory.

<sup>33</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 185.

<sup>34</sup> *Greville's Life of Sidney*, ed. N. Smith, p. 16. Sidney's own modest explanation of his motive, namely, to unburden his head of fancies, does not necessarily conflict with these statements.

In this famous and influential romance, as in the *Faery Queen*, the age was given an example of ideal imitation, a poet's visions of beauty and truth being bodied forth in speaking pictures.<sup>35</sup>

Spenser's fictional imitations, highly romantic and idealistic, are veiled in a mist of allegory, the "misty smoke" so much admired by Hawes, who aspired to hide his "mind underneath a fable." Neglecting the plebeian drama, Spenser chooses pastoralism and romance as forms especially fitted for hiding from "common view"<sup>36</sup> the "fairer parts" of his work and for giving it elevation and distinction. In this he was successful, being much praised by his contemporaries for his "high drifts" and "deep conceits." But modern critics find the "continued allegory, or dark conceit,"<sup>37</sup> of his *Faery Queen* loose and inconsistent. Looseness and inconsistency, however, were necessary characteristics of the allegories extracted from literature by the forced interpretations of Spenser's contemporaries; and the critical comment of the time indicates that it was not expected that the allegory of a poem should be clearly and logically worked out from beginning to end. Spenser explains to Raleigh the "general intention" of his work, because he knows "how doubtfully all allegories may be construed." It was deemed commendably sufficient if the poem contained pleasing mysteries, deep conceits, high drifts; a certain romantic haziness in the allegory added to its charm rather than detracted from it, and Spenser's covert fables, pleasingly misty, were in accord with the allegorical theory and taste of his time and were more than satisfactory.

Moreover, Spenser had other interests than allegory and, by virtue of the precept and example of his patron Sir Philip Sidney as well as by other influences of his age, he seems ever to have been on the verge of

<sup>35</sup> Sidney's theory of poetic fiction further connects itself interestingly with the mooted question as to whether his sonnet sequence is to be considered autobiographical or fictitious. Courthope (*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 226), after commenting on the idealism of the *Arcadia*, remarks that "another mood of Sidney's romantic idealism is embodied in the series of sonnets entitled *Astrophel and Stella*". He further maintains that the sonnets are of "fictitious character" and that "such compositions are the work of a poet, and not of a historian or an autobiographer". Whatever may be the truth of the matter, Sidney's own idea of what poetry should be admirably supports Courthope's contention. If the sonnets constitute an ideal imitation of the poet's dreams of what might have been, the fiction is so vividly and feelingly conceived and imaged that the reader is almost constrained to accept it as true, thereby confirming Sidney's assertion that feigned examples may have as much force as true ones.

<sup>36</sup> See verses prefixed to *F. Q.*

<sup>37</sup> Prefatory Letter to Raleigh.

giving that free scope to his creative imagination that would relinquish allegory for ideal imitation or pure fiction. Indeed, the "feigned history" of his *Faery Queen* admirably exemplifies Sidney's conception of fiction as ideal imitation. Although he is amiably disposed toward those who "had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in the way of precepts, or sermoned at large," he finds "doctrine by example" "so much more profitable and gracious . . . than by rule"<sup>38</sup> that he feels no doubt as to the advisability of employing a plausible fiction for the conveyance of his ideals of life. Choosing material amenable to the utmost freedom of imagination, he, for further attractiveness, colors it "with an historical fiction." The historical coloring, however, is nowise at variance with Sidney's contention that history is inadequate as the subject-matter of poetry, for in Spenser's poem the unsatisfying limitations of true history are transcended by the portrayal in feigned history of "acts and events greater and more heroical."<sup>39</sup>

In his idealized poetic fiction, then, Spenser meets the test reiterated by Sidney, "the right describing note to know a poet by," namely, "that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching."<sup>40</sup> From his "fore-conceit" as a maker, ranging freely within the zodiac of his wit, he bodies forth in vivid, speaking pictures the wonderful creations of ideal imitation. Like Sidney, turning away from the brazen world of nature with its disappointing illusions and unrealized ambitions, he delivers the golden world of a poet's imagination. Writing in full sympathy with the theory of poetic fiction held by Sidney, his friend and courtly patron, and strikingly exemplifying the principal points of this theory, this poets' poet brings forth, as Lowell says, the first great ideal poem in English.

Webbe's general narrowness of view precludes any such lofty conception of creative imitation as that held by Sidney and Spenser. In fact his ideas on fiction are, like those of such writers as Golding and Lodge, limited to the allegorical aspect. This is manifested in his attitude toward Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses*, he says, "though it consisted of feigned fables for the most part, and poetical inventions, yet being moralized according to his meaning, and the truth of every tale being discovered, it is a work of exceeding wisdom and sound judgment"; and

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>39</sup> Bacon (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, IV, 2). Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers work with similar freedom in historical material.

<sup>40</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 160.

"the rest of his doings, though they tend to the vain delights of love and dalliance . . . yet surely are mixed with much good counsel and profitable lessons, if they be wisely and narrowly read."<sup>41</sup> Webbe rather neglects the allegorical interpretation of the *Aeneid*, but he finds in the eclogues of the ancients, "in a cloak of simplicity" under "rude and homely" matter and simple personages, "much pleasant and profitable delight." In discussing this form he gives Spenser enthusiastic praise for his "learned conveyance" of hidden meanings, his "much matter uttered somewhat covertly."<sup>42</sup>

Puttenham, neglecting the allegorical interpretation in a larger sense, though commending allegory as one of the courtly figures of speech, deals with fiction mainly under the aspects of making and imitation. By making, which he regards as the highest kind of poetical activity, he evidently means a mode of invention such as that so strongly insisted upon by Sidney as the essential and distinguishing element of poetry, namely, the fiction of ideal imitation. This higher aspect of the art he takes up at the very beginning of his long discourse<sup>43</sup> where he differentiates between maker and translator and asserts the preëminence of the former. The poet as maker is "such as (by way of resemblance and reverently) we may say of God; who without any travail to his divine imagination made all the world of naught, nor also by any pattern or mold, as the Platonics with their Ideas do phantastically suppose." The true poet "makes and contrives out of his own brain both the verse and the matter of his poem, and not by any foreign copy or example, as doth the translator, who therefore may well be said a versifier, but not a poet."<sup>44</sup> By virtue of this high nature of the work of a real poet his "name and profession" are given "no small dignity and preëminence, above all other artificers, scientific or mechanical." Although a poet may also be a "counterfeiter" or copier, expressing "the true and lively of everything . . . set before him," making his work of a much higher order; and in general it is "of poets thus to be conceived, that if they be able to devise and make all these things of themselves,

<sup>41</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 238, 239.

<sup>42</sup> *Ib.*, 262, 264.

<sup>43</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 3, 4.

<sup>44</sup> These are the words that offended Sir John Harington, who soon after brought out his translation of *Orlando Furioso*, presumably an aristocratic performance far above the level of the despised "versifier" (cf. Smith, ii, 196).

without any subject of verity, that they be (by manner of speech) as creating gods."

In a chapter<sup>45</sup> devoted to "historical poesy"—which kind, then coming into vogue in England, he gives a very high place, especially because of the "delectation reviving our spirits" from beholding "as it were in a glass the lovely image of our dear forefathers"<sup>46</sup>—Puttenham is not so much at odds as might at first appear with Sidney's rejection of history as the subject-matter of poetry. For he holds that historical poetry may freely transcend fact "expedient to the purpose, namely to be used either for example or for pleasure." The poet has the "handling . . . at his pleasure" and his "feigned matter or altogether fabulous," besides making "more mirth," may also be better "for example than the most true and veritable." These advantages of feigned matter over fact led the poets of Greece and Rome "to devise many historical matters of no verity at all" and we have the "fabulous or mixt" reports of Homer and others invaluable both for "honest recreation and good example." In short, Puttenham's theory of historical poetry, allowing such fictitious additions and alterations as may be necessary for the poet's idealization of his material, approximates Spenser's "historical fiction" and Bacon's "feigned history" and permits the liberties of Sidney's ideal imitation.

Poetic fiction receives further attention from Puttenham at the end of his treatise in a chapter on the relations between art and nature. After outlining the various relations between art and nature such as are especially illustrated in arts other than poetry, he comes to the consideration of the more purely imaginative work of the poet. This he places highest of all; the poet by virtue of the activity and excellence of his invention, helped by "a clear and bright fantasy and imagination," rises above other artists, for he works "even as nature herself working by her own peculiar virtue and proper instinct and not by example or

<sup>45</sup> Smith, ii, 40-44.

<sup>46</sup> This is in the spirit of the work of Daniel, whom Drayton criticized as "too much a historian in verse" (Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iii, 19). Daniel, however, allowed himself the license of fiction, declaring in "The Epistle Dedicatory" of his *Civil Wars* that "many of these images are drawn with the pencil of mine own conceiving", though he is confident that "they are according to the portraiture of nature" (*Works*, ii, 7). Puttenham's own work in this kind, which enhances his interest in the subject, he designates as "a little brief romance or historical ditty".

meditation or exercise as all other artificers do."<sup>47</sup> Thus placing the poet's creative imagination on an equality with nature and regarding its workings as due to some peculiar rare gift or instinct, Puttenham, like Sidney, exalts poetic fiction as the highest form of intellectual and spiritual activity and the loftiest expression of the human soul.

Sir John Harington names as "the two parts of poetry," "invention or fiction and verse," declaring in concord with Sidney that the "principal part . . . is fiction and imitation."<sup>48</sup> Unlike Sidney, however, looking chiefly to past performances in poetry rather than to future creation, Harington in considering poetic fiction is occupied largely with the allegorical aspect. Commending the practice of the ancients of wrapping in their writings "divers and sundry meanings" or "mysteries," he explains the three chief senses to be found in an allegorical poetic fiction. First, in the "literal sense," there may be "set down in manner of an history the acts and notable exploits of some persons worthy memory; then in the same fiction" may be found the "moral sense profitable for the active life of man"; and lastly may be comprehended "some true understanding of natural philosophy, or sometimes of politic government, and now and then of divinity."<sup>49</sup> In view of this wealth of meaning in poetry, Harington challenges any man to "judge if it be a matter of mean art or wit to contain in one historical narration, either true or feigned, so many, so diverse, and so deep conceits." Giving an example of this threefold interpretation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he declares that he could pick out "like infinite allegories" from "other poetical fictions"—he might have cited the recently published *Faery Queen*. Such poetry affords something for all: the "weaker

<sup>47</sup> Cp. again Shakespeare's Poet in *Timon of Athens* (I, i, 20):

Our poesy is as a gum, which oozes  
From whence 'tis nourish'd. The fire i' the flint  
Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame  
Provokes itself.

<sup>48</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 201 ff. Harington of course is influenced by Sidney's *Apology*.

<sup>49</sup> Cp. Spenser's allegories. Bacon, after explaining his divisions of poetry—"narrative, representative, and allusive"—and discussing among other kinds "parabolical", observes that "there remaineth yet another use of poetry parabolical, opposite to that which we last mentioned: for that tendeth to demonstrate and illustrate that which is taught or delivered, and this other to retire and obscure it: that is, when the secrets and mysteries of religion, policy, or philosophy, are involved in fables or parables. Of this in divine poesy we see the use is authorized" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. II, IV, 4).

capacities" may feed upon the story and sweetness of verse; for "stronger stomachs" there is the "moral sense"; and for the "more high conceited" the deeper allegorical significance.<sup>50</sup> This "mystical writing of verse," moreover, Harington considers an excellent way to preserve learning from corruption, and he holds up the example of the best poets of ancient times, who purposely concealed the "deep mysteries of learning" under a "veil of fables," one reason for this being that these mysteries "might not be rashly abused by profane wits."

Harington evidently lays more stress upon the allegorical element of poetic fiction than does Sidney. With Sidney the fiction is justified chiefly by the ideals that it embodies, with Harington chiefly by the allegorical interpretation that can be extracted. Sidney doubtless had in mind such potent, concrete idealism as is embodied in the work of himself and Spenser, while Harington, thinking of Ariosto and Ovid, felt the need of emphasizing interpretation. Ultimately, however, their views are not greatly divergent, and Harington's praise of allegory centers about his advocacy of fiction or imitation as the "principal part of poetry." By imitation he means, as did Sidney, the work of creative imagination. The art of poets is "an imitation," he says, and therefore they "are allowed to feign what they list." Poets never affirming their works to be true give them forth as "fables and imitations." Such are parables, and imitation in this form is supported by the example of Demosthenes and the prophet Nathan—or, "to go higher, did not our Saviour himself speak in parables?" Wherein it is manifest that he in all holiness, wisdom, and truth "used parables . . . even such as discreet poets use . . . and therefore for that part of poetry of imitation," Harington's conclusion is that "nobody will make any question but it is not only allowable, but godly and commendable, if the poets ill handling of it do not mar and pervert the good use of it."

In Nash's conception poetic fiction comprises fable and allegory. He accounts "poetry as of a more hidden and divine kind of philosophy, enwrapped in blind fables and dark stories." Under "feigned stories" are included "many profitable moral precepts," and the more deeply hidden the allegory the better the poetry, for "even as in vines the grapes that are fairest and sweetest are couched under the branches that are broadest and biggest, even so in poems the things that are most profitable are shrouded under the fables that are most obscure." Re-

<sup>50</sup> Cp. Stanyhurst, Ded. *Aeneid* (Smith, i, 136): "The shallow reader may be delighted with a smooth tale, and the diving searcher may be advantaged by sowning a precious treatise".

iterating this figure, and declaring that because a matter is "fabulous" it is not, therefore, "frivolous," Nash cites Virgil, Ovid, and Lucian as expressing divine mysteries under the "covert" of fables and hopes that "there is no man so distrustful to doubt that deeper divinity is included in poet's inventions." Even most wanton fictions have their defense, for the unchaste part can be disregarded and, according to the old simile, "as the bee out of the bitterest flowers and sharpest thistles gathers honey, so out of the filthiest fables may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected."<sup>51</sup> Nash's view of poetic fiction, in short, exemplifies the traditional moral-allegorical interpretation academically applied to the poetry of the ancients.

Chapman's advocacy of the fiction of poetry seems to derive special enthusiasm from his own work in translating Homer. His translation of the *Shield of Achilles* gives rise to triumphant elation over the "depth of conceit" of his author, whose allegorical fiction he thinks overmatches anything to be found in Virgil. In the preface to his *Odyssey* he insists upon the high nature of the truths contained in poetic fiction and emphasizes their great value in application to the conduct of life. "Nor is this all-comprising poesy fantastic or merely fictive," he declares, for it embodies "the most material and doctrinal illations of truth, both for all manly information of manners in the young, all prescription of justice, and even Christian piety, in the most grave and high governed." For such purposes the poet, "with all height of expression," "creates both a body and a soul . . . wherein, if the body (being the letter or history) seems fictive, and beyond possibility to bring into act, the sense then and allegory, which is the soul, is to be sought." The poet has license to exaggerate the body or story of his fiction in order to impress its inner meaning, which may represent the deepest truth. For the purposes of his art he is at liberty to give "a more eminent expressure of virtue for her loveliness, and of vice for her ugliness, in their several effects, going beyond the life, than any art within life can possibly delineate."<sup>52</sup> Here again is the doctrine of ideal imitation, and Chapman adds the thought that the poet in embodying his ideals is setting forth the deepest realities. There is no "such reality of wisdom's truth in all human excellence, as in poet's fictions . . . no artist being so strictly and inextricably confined to all the laws of learning, wisdom, and truth as a poet."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 328, 329, 332.

<sup>52</sup> Ded. *Odyssey*, Works, (1875), ii, 237.

<sup>53</sup> Pref. *Iliad*, Works, iii, 3.

One of the great problems of the criticism of this period, it is evident, is to gain recognition for poetry as a high and serious expression of truth, and thereby to justify the art. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to make clear the fact of two kinds of truth and to discriminate between the two: literal or historical truth must be differentiated from spiritual or ideal truth; and the reality and rare value of the latter established. Poetry as fiction has been condemned as ostensibly false. To meet this objection the allegorical interpretation is applied whereby fictitious stories are made to yield profound moral truths applicable to the life of man. The value of poetry according to this conception is measured largely by the significance to be extracted by a skillful interpretation, and poetry full of hidden meanings and deep conceits is deemed thereby to be of superior merit. The conception of poetic fiction as allegory, however, resting as it often does on the allegorical interpretation of ancient poems in which allegory was not intended, is vague and indefinite, and without substantial philosophical basis; and in general, though poetic fiction as allegory has the advantage of placing the art somewhat out of reach of base wits, this mode of poetry is not wholly adequate and satisfying, lacking as it does the necessary freedom for the highest workings of the imagination.

But though allegory is extolled as a mode of interpretation in defense of poetic fiction and as a potent method of enhancing poetic values and conserving art, its limitations are not allowed seriously to hamper poetry, its meaning and application remaining vague and indefinite. The signification of the term itself is loosely extended and, as with Gascoigne, often means little more than invention. A clearer and more philosophically substantial explanation of poetic fiction is therefore needed, and it comes in Sir Philip Sidney's promulgation of ideal imitation. This proposes frankly to give up any pretense of fact or history, or any deceptive mingling of fact and fiction, and to accept poetry as a product of pure imagination. Fiction in the aspect of ideal imitation is to be regarded as the very essence or heart of poetry, the element that makes it poetry. It is the high and peculiar function of poetry to furnish men with the necessary fiction of life, in other words with ideals. Ideals in the form of fictitious examples, all others being imperfect and insufficient, are indispensable for man's proper mental and spiritual development. The examples afforded by life and history, being far from perfect, are inadequate, and, since philosophy is not sufficiently concrete in its appeal to serve as a potent force in everyday life, it becomes the unique office of

poetry in transcending these limitations to minister in the highest possible way to the welfare of man by furnishing him with vivid examples of life as it might be and should be. Objections that these examples are fictitious are absurd, for the great heroes of fiction are evidently truer to men's ideals of universal truth and justice than are the heroes of real life, and men instinctively accept them as such. In the truth and power of the poet's fictions or ideal imitations, moreover, lies the real test of poetry, for his ability to perceive and body forth universal truth is indubitably a surer and fairer measure of his powers as a poet than any that could be applied to any less vital aspect of his art. Thus, poetry, by virtue of its essential and distinguishing element fiction, stands as the highest expression of man's ideals, and as such is one of the most powerful factors in his spiritual development.

#### IV. THE DIDACTIC FUNCTION OF POETRY

To teach and to please were universally recognized by Elizabethan critics as the two great ends of poetry. The conception of poetry as a form of knowledge and means of instruction was peculiarly acceptable, according as it did, not only with national literary traditions and practices handed down from the past, but also with the cultural motive and experience resulting from contact with the new learning. As in the earlier days miracle plays and poetical allegories afforded moral lessons, so in the time of Elizabeth the new wealth of classical and renaissance poetry was regarded by eager readers as a bounteous source of instruction in the ways of life and the world. Learning was necessary to enter into this treasury and much learning it yielded. Poetry thus viewed was the repository for the wisdom of the learned and great wherein they preserved in pleasing form the mysteries of knowledge for the use and advancement of mankind.

The didactic function of poetry, moreover, was strongly set before Elizabethan critics by such early writers as Elyot and Wilson. Elyot had devoted a chapter in his famous *Governor*<sup>1</sup> to the praise of poetry as a very necessary part of the education of young gentlemen. His discussion contains the assertion that in ancient times all wisdom was supposed to be contained in poetry, which "was the first philosophy that ever was known: whereby men from their childhood were brought to the reason how to live well, learning thereby not only manners and natural affections, but also the wonderful works of nature, mixing serious

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, chap. x, p. 120 ff.

matter with things that were pleasant." For this Elyot alleges the authority of Plato and Aristotle, and he further supports preceptorial values by some verses that he "interprets" from Horace. Homer, he asserts, affords incomparable lessons and inspiration for young men, and Virgil possesses similar advantages. Even in comedy "evil is not taught but discovered," and in the "wanton books" of Plautus and Ovid Elyot finds "right commendable and noble sentences," concluding that, though such books should be withheld from some children, "none ancient poet would be excluded from the lesson of such as desireth to come to the perfection of wisdom." The instructional value of poetry is also affirmed by Thomas Wilson, who in his *Rhetoric* asserting that poets are "wise men" declares that there is no tale among them that does not comprehend something pertaining "either to the amendment of manners, to the knowledge of truth, to the setting forth of nature's work, or else to the understanding of some notable thing done."<sup>2</sup>

Authors and printers throughout the period in prefaces and titles commonly profess their philanthropically didactic intentions. Such motive handed down from the middle ages appears in the title-page of John Wayland's version of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (1554)—"wherein may be seen what vices bring men to destruction, with notable warnings how the like may be avoided."<sup>3</sup> A similar "wherein" clause was long inserted in the title page of the *Mirror for Magistrates*; and in the edition of 1578 William Baldwin, in his solemn address to the nobility and others in office, calls special attention to the examples or lessons contained in the book, trusting that they may move men to amendment—"this is the chief end why this book is set forth."<sup>4</sup> Translators in general profess

<sup>2</sup> Smith, i, xxiv. These utterances of Elyot and Wilson may be compared with those of Jonson in the dedication of his *Volpone*, where he lays stress upon "the doctrine, which is the principal end of poesy, to inform men in the best way of living," and characterizes the true poet as one that is "able to inform young men to all good discipline, inflame grown men to all great virtues, keep old men in their best and supreme state . . . that comes forth the interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine no less than human, a master in manners". Cowley begins his poem "The Resurrection":

Not winds to voyagers at sea  
Nor showers to earth more necessary be . . .  
Than verse to virtue.

<sup>3</sup> See Haslewood's *Introd. Mirror for Magistrates*, vol. i, p. iv.

<sup>4</sup> Haslewood, ii, 5. The printer regards the book as a lantern having sufficient light to guide "wandering steps both into the happiness of this world and of the world to come".

the aim of instructing their readers in the wisdom of the ancients. Arthur Golding affirms that one of his purposes in translating Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is to afford his English readers "good instruction," and he recommends the work as "fraughted inwardly with most pithy instructions and wholesome examples, and containing both ways most exquisite cunning and deep knowledge." Readers must reduce "the sense that paynims do express . . . to right of Christian law" and then, properly interpreted, his poet will afford "instructions which import the praise of virtues, and the shame of vices, with due rewards of either of the same."<sup>5</sup>

Ascham deplores the abuse of the custom of "honest titles" and over bold dedications "to virtuous and honorable personages" by which means English readers are beguiled into reading "fond books," especially those of Italy.<sup>6</sup> Though in general a staunch advocate of the culture of the ancients, he thinks that ignorance of the subject-matter of Plautus and Terence "were better for a civil gentlemen than knowledge."<sup>7</sup> To such writers as Gascoigne and Whetstone more liberal views were acceptable, and educational values were given wide application. Whetstone honors Plautus and Terence and in general maintains upon Plato's authority that "naughtiness comes of the corruption of nature, and not by reading or hearing the lives of the good or lewd." As it is put in Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*:

The bee and spider by a diverse power,  
Suck honey and poison from the selfsame flower.

Any kind of action "grave or lascivious" may be presented with good effect, Whetstone thinks, if "the conclusion shows the confusion of vice and the cherishing of virtue."<sup>8</sup> In putting forth his *Rock of Regard*, a book made up in part of Italian stories, he is apparently anxious to anticipate such objections as Ascham had made and, affirming his general "well meaning," he assures his reader that he "may here find rules his life for to direct." George Gascoigne, citing the text: "All that is written is written for our instruction," writes similarly in behalf of his

<sup>5</sup> Ded. Transl. Ovid.

<sup>6</sup> Ascham's religious prejudice is manifest here; the books were objectionable as tending "not so much to corrupt honest living as they do to subvert true religion. More papists be made by your merry books of Italy than by your earnest books of Louain" (Smith, i, 3).

<sup>7</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ded. *Promus and Cassandra*, Smith, i, 59, 60.

work, exhorting the young gentlemen of England to profit by his example as shown in his *Posies* and to run not upon the rocks that have brought him to shipwreck.<sup>9</sup>

Lodge lays great stress upon the educational value of poetry. Marveling at the ignorance of Gosson, who though "brought up in the University" absurdly dispraises the art, he discredits his folly by the opinion of Erasmus, who makes poetry "the pathway to knowledge." In fulfilling their purpose, "to draw men to wisdom," poets become "the very footpaths to knowledge and understanding."<sup>10</sup> "Ill writers," "poets that savor of ribaldry," to be sure, disgrace the art, and Lodge exhorts Gosson to turn his energies to the "expulsion of such enormities" and the correcting of abuses—and this Gosson tells us later was his motive in writing. A further point in Lodge's view, and perhaps a rather significant one, is the fact that he seems impressed with the didactic possibilities—yet unrealized in England—of poetic satire. Poets, he affirms, were the first "disturbers of the wicked"; and a poet's wit can correct without offending, the correction of sin being mitigated by his reproving it "covertly in shadows." Or more openly, Chaucer, for example, "in pleasant vein can rebuke sin uncontrolled."<sup>11</sup> Lodge deplores the lack in his own time of satirical poets who might decipher abuses and thereby—as was attempted later—"rid our assemblies" of many of the brotherhood of Gosson.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Complete Poems*, Hazlitt, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, i, 66, 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 69, 75, 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ib.*, 82. Edward Hake in dedicating his *News out of Paul's Churchyard* (1579) (see Isham Reprints, No. 2) thus versifies:

For that same explains the present state,  
And sets to view the vices of the time  
In novel verse and satire's sharp effect,  
Still drawn along and penned in pleasant rime,  
For sole intent good living to erect  
And sin rescind which rifely reigns abroad  
In people's hearts full fraught with sinful load.

A "thankless task" Hall finds such work (Prol. Satire I)—

Go daring muse, on with thy thankless task,  
And do the ugly face of vice unmask—

as likewise does Richard Robinson, but both espouse it as did Donne and earlier Gascoigne. Robinson in spite of disdain or danger will not cause his "pen to stay one drop of ink from painting the praise of the virtuous, or telling the troth to the tyrant,

The educational function of poetry is set forth with strong enthusiasm by Sir Philip Sidney. The early poets, he declares, are to be regarded as "fathers in learning." Poetry "hath been the first light-giver to ignorance"; with its "charming sweetness" it has power to draw "wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge." The pleasant exercise of the mind "with the sweet delights of poetry," he suggests, might be a means of softening and sharpening the "hard dull wits" of the "barbarous and simple Indians" and of introducing learning among them.<sup>13</sup> He utterly denies "that there is sprung out of the earth a more fruitful knowledge," and conjures his reader, half seriously, to believe with Clauserus that under the veil of poet's fables have been given "all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, natural and moral."<sup>14</sup>

"In moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges," the poet far surpasses the historian, for he not only furnishes the mind with more perfect knowledge, but impels it to shun evil and to accept and follow things that are good. He teaches "by a divine delightfulness," and in its vividness and charm his work possesses much "more force in teaching" than the "regular instruction of philosophy."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this "setting forward and moving to well doing" places the laurel crown upon the poet as victorious over historian and philosopher in the noble work of teaching

by familiar examples of the other evil disposed persons as a caveat to warn the wicked, and to encourage the godly to persist in virtue" (*Golden Mirror*, 1589). Cp. Ben Jonson (*Ode to Himself*):

And since our dainty age  
Cannot endure reproof,  
Make not thyself a page  
To that strumpet the stage;  
But sing high and aloof,  
Safe from the wolf's black jaw  
And the dull ass's hoof.

And Shakespeare's Poet (*Timon of Athens*, I, i, 45):

My free drift  
Halts not particularly, but moves itself  
In a wide sea of wax: no leveled malice  
Infects one comma in the course I hold;  
But flies an eagle flight, bold and forth on,  
Leaving no tract behind.

<sup>13</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 151, 153.

<sup>14</sup> *Ib.*, 206. Cp. Nash: "There is no study, but it doth illustrate and beautify" (*Works*, McKerrow, i, 193).

<sup>15</sup> *Ib.*, 166.

men. Since "consideration of men's manners" is the "supreme knowledge" and "virtuous action" is the "end of all earthly learning," the final aim of learning being "to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of,"—then "no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue," and poetry, whose end is "delightful teaching," being "the most familiar to teach it, and most princely to move towards it," becomes the "noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed."<sup>16</sup>

All this possesses more breadth and truth than most modern critics are willing to accord it. In order to value Sidney's views at their true worth we must divest ourselves of the profound influence of a period that Sidney did not live to see—and that is impossible. Genuine unification of ethical and esthetic values, so easy and natural to his thought, is a rare accomplishment in post-renaissance thinking. Virtue to Sidney did not connote hardness and plainness, but gentleness and beauty; its path was a path not of thorns but of roses. The esthetic aspect is what chiefly appealed to him; in virtue there ever lurked witchery and charm, "in her best colors . . . one must needs be enamored of her."<sup>17</sup> Her fruits were fruits of joy and gladness and her ways the delightful ways of beauty and poetry,—

For all that's good is beautiful and fair.<sup>18</sup>

Spenser was declared by Milton to be "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas," and he held prestige on similar grounds among his contemporaries. From a letter<sup>19</sup> by his friend Bryskett we learn that he was held in high regard for his attainments in philosophy, though he preferred to impart his knowledge as a poet. Bryskett and several other gentlemen in company made an earnest and ceremonious request that Spenser should yield them a general exposition of moral philosophy, declaring its principles and benefits and the parts "whereby virtues are to be distinguished from vices." Replying to this entreaty, "every man applauding most with like words of request," Spenser courteously begs to be excused, inasmuch as he has "already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse under the title of a *Faery Queen* to represent all the moral virtues, assigning to every virtue a knight to be

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.*, 159, 161.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 170.

<sup>18</sup> Spenser, *Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*.

<sup>19</sup> See Spenser, Globe ed., p. xxxiv.

the patron and defender of the same, in whose actions and feats of arms and chivalry the operations of that virtue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten down and overcome." The answer to their request then, "containing in effect the ethic part of moral philosophy," Spenser tells them is to be found in his poem where he has "taken in hand to discourse at large" upon this subject. The didactic motive of the *Faery Queen* is also avowed by Spenser in his prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which he declares that his object was to portray "in Arthur before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues." If the first twelve books embodying this motive should be "well accepted," he would perhaps be "encouraged to frame the other part of politic virtues" in Arthur's "person, after he came to be king." "The general end therefore of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline"—an aim reflected in the numerous courtesy and culture books of the time, an aim which would have been applauded by Sidney, and which, in general, was in accord with the aspirations of an age that found in the noble Sir Philip its pattern of excellence.

Spenser has been reproached—in our generation, not his own<sup>20</sup>—for failing to realize his ethical professions.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, his general didactic or

<sup>20</sup> Gabriel Harvey ("Third Letter" [1592]; Smith, ii, 234) extols Spenser and Sidney as examples for Robert Greene, exhorting Greene to "be a divine poet indeed; and use heavenly eloquence indeed; and employ thy golden talent with amounting usance indeed; and with heroical cantos honor right virtue, and brave valor indeed; as noble Sir Philip Sidney and gentle Master Spenser have done, with immortal fame". In even more extravagant terms Harvey (*Pierce's Supererogation*; Smith, ii, 263-5) praises the virtues of Sidney's *Arcadia*; against which praise, as expressing the point of view of another generation, may be placed the words of Milton, "that vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*", "not to be read at any time without good caution",—but which, as Milton protests, Charles I made use of on the scaffold.

<sup>21</sup> The following lines from the epilogue of the *Shepherd's Calendar* should also be noted:

Lo! I have made a Calendar . . . . .  
To teach the ruder shepherd how to feed his sheep,  
And from the falser's fraud his folded flock to keep.

E. K. lays stress on the didactic purport of the *Calendar*, commenting on its "moral wisdom" and on the fact that the author "seemeth . . . . . to unfold great matter of argument covertly" and classing five of the twelve eclogues as "moral, which for the most part be mixed with some satirical bitterness". Webbe also finds in Spenser's eclogues "many good moral lessons" (Smith, i, 264). Puttenham (Smith, ii, 40) regards the eclogue as a form for "moral discipline" and the "amendment of man's behavior".

cultural purpose as conceived and executed in the *Faery Queen* is perhaps quite as much esthetic as ethical. His ethical sense, pre-puritan and of the Renaissance like that of Sidney, was insensibly fused with his esthetic sense, the two being one and inseparable. Differentiating his work from that of low and rude rimesters and elevating it by its vastly superior cultural and spiritual qualities, he sets forth his ideals of life essentially embodied in forms of beauty,—

For all that fair is, is by nature good;  
That is a sign to know the gentle blood.<sup>22</sup>

The didactic function of poetry is strongly emphasized by Webbe, as might be expected in view of his pedagogical experience. Chaucer's works he commends "for delight and profitable knowledge." In Homer, he asserts, may be perceived "what the right use of poetry is: which indeed is to mingle profit with pleasure, and so to delight the reader with pleasantness of his art, as in the meantime his mind may be well instructed with knowledge and wisdom."<sup>23</sup> The "very ground of right poetry" is "to give profitable counsel," "profitable and pleasant lessons . . . for the instruction of life."<sup>24</sup> Even wanton and dissolute poems may furnish "wise and circumspect readers" with "very many profitable lessons," and by wary and skillful reading "good lessons" may be found in the very worst. Ovid's "most wanton books," for instance, Webbe agrees with Elyot, may afford the "heedful reader" "very many pithy and wise sentences," though such works should be prohibited from young minds.<sup>25</sup> It is Webbe's charitable opinion that "the wantonest poets of all, in their most lascivious works . . . sought rather by that means to withdraw men's minds (especially the best natures) from such foul vices than to allure them to embrace such beastly follies as they

<sup>22</sup> *Hymn in Honor of Beauty*. Cp. Keats: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty".

<sup>23</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 234. Webbe would evidently agree with Meres that "poetry doth most delight which is mixt with philosophy—Plutarchus" (*Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 309).

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, 250, 251.

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.*, 254. Nash, likewise, would restrain youth from reading ribaldry, and wishes it understood that in praising poetry he does not approve of anything unchaste or obscene even in Virgil or Ovid; yet, using the popular bee simile, as "out of the bitterest flowers and sharpest thistles" honey is gathered, so, he thinks with Webbe, "out of the filthiest fables may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected", though spiders, on the other hand, "suck poison out of the honeycomb and corruption out of the holiest things". "The fables of poets", he declares further, "must of necessity be fraught with wisdom and knowledge" (Smith, i, 329, 332).

detected."<sup>26</sup> Nothing, he thinks, is more to be desired than the "sweet allurements to virtues and commodious caveats from vices, of which poetry is exceeding plentiful."<sup>27</sup> Spenser's covert reprehension of abuses and Chaucer's learned and happy manner of girding at vices are especially pleasing to Webbe, who like some other critics of the time shows a disposition to welcome satire.

Puttenham's enumeration of the various kinds of subjects to be treated in poetry assumes for the most part didactic intent. He insists that poetry should not be "employed upon any unworthy matter and subject, nor used to vain purposes," as in uttering vicious or foolish conceits "of no good example and doctrine"; but he admits as subject-matter practically anything for "necessary use of the present time, or good instruction of posterity"; among other subjects, "the revealing of sciences natural and other profitable arts" "for instruction of the people and increase of knowledge," "the praise of virtue and reproof of vice, the instruction of moral doctrines." Poetry, he believes, should feign good examples for men to put into use, and should report "for the common benefit," as "poesy historical," "the famous acts of princes and the virtuous and worthy lives of our forefathers."<sup>28</sup> It happily has forms for reprehension of "the common abuses of man's life" and "the evil and outrageous behavior of princes," and for the commendation of "virtue in the inferior sort" and in "great princes."<sup>29</sup> But though Puttenham attaches much importance to ethical values, he deprecates the limitations of ethical narrowness; Gower, for instance, is to be commended "for his

<sup>26</sup> Cp. Lodge (*Works*, Hunterian Club, iv, p. 4):

For sure the vice that they did lay in sight,  
Was for to make it grow in more despite.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, i, 251, 252. The poet's "only pride", according to Spenser in his *Mother Hubbard's Tale*,

Is virtue to advance and vice deride.

Cp. *Hamlet* (III, ii, 23): "The purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image". Lodge says of poetic art (*Fig for Momus*, *op. cit.*, iii, 61):

But clothing virtue and adorning it,  
Wit shines in virtue, virtue shines in wit;  
True science suited in well-couched rimes,  
Is nourished for fame in after times.

<sup>28</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 25, 40, 46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 31, 34, 36, 44.

good and grave moralities," but he is deficient in that otherwise he "had nothing in him highly to be commended."<sup>30</sup>

Sir John Harington terms poetry the "grandmother of all learning" and insists that "there are many good lessons to be learned out of it." He does not give poetry as high a place as does Sidney "in respect of the high end of all, which is the health of our own souls." For this end, he thinks, "not only poetry but all other studies of philosophy are in a manner vain and superfluous," though for the "profounder studies" of divinity and the Holy Scriptures poetry affords the best kind of preparation. Heroic poetry, the highest and stateliest form and least infected with wantonness, will make men "wiser and honester" and, by virtue of its power to "erect the mind and lift it up to the consideration of the highest matters," is especially to be recommended as a most meet study for young men.<sup>31</sup> Poetry may be subject to abuse in such forms as the pastoral and sonnet, but "though many times they savor of wantonness and love and toying, and, now and then breaking the rules of poetry, go into plain scurrility, yet even the worst of them may not be ill applied, and are, I must confess, too delightful."<sup>32</sup> With respect to his own Ariosto, Harington gives his readers the caveat to read "lascivious" parts "as my author meant them, to breed detestation and not delectation." In further justification of his author he makes an interesting application of the doctrine of decorum, an application that others with Harington had felt the need of in vindication of an agreeable realism. "There is so meet a decorum," he declares, "in the persons of those that speak lasciviously, as any judgment must allow." Chaucer "incurreth far more the reprehension of flat scurrility . . . in which only the decorum he keeps is that that excuseth it and maketh it more tolerable."<sup>33</sup>

Daniel and Chapman, the one as "historian in verse," the other as translator, both strongly assert the didactic intent of their work. The

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 64.

<sup>31</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 197, 198.

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, 209.

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*, 214, 215. Hawes (see *Percy Soc.*, xviii, p. 53), classing Chaucer with "moral Gower", does not feel the need of such excuse:

As moral Gower, whose sententious dew  
Adown reflareth with fair golden beams,  
And after Chaucer's all abroad doth shew,  
Our vices to cleanse; his departed streams  
Kindling our hearts with the fiery lemes  
Of moral virtue.

"argument" of the *Civil Wars*, Daniel affirms, was undertaken "with a purpose to show the deformities of civil dissensions, and the miserable events of rebellions, conspiracies, and bloody revengements"<sup>34</sup>—a patriotic ethical aim akin to that of the famous *Mirror for Magistrates*.<sup>35</sup> Chapman, deprecating the low versifying of his own day, exalts the heroic qualities of Homer as vastly superior and exhorts readers to seek in the *Odyssey* the sense and allegory, "which is the soul" and "which intends a more eminent expresse of virtue for her loveliness, and of vice for her ugliness,"<sup>36</sup> Homer, in general, "hath his chief holiness of estimation for matter and instruction"; "counselors have never better oracles than his lines, fathers have no morals so profitable for their children as his counsels."<sup>37</sup>

The conception of the didactic function of poetry, strongly intrenched since the middle ages and in a measure re-inforced by the reformation, was evidently much broadened and liberalized by the influences of classical and renaissance literature. In their esteem for the poetry of the ancients, some of the critics—either by a charitable view of the poet's intentions which threw the stigma of unethical construction upon the reader, or by a convenient extension of the doctrine of decorum—made bold to declare the instructional import and value of the work of even

<sup>34</sup> *Works*, ii, 6. Daniel's poem, only one of a number of long versified historical or didactic works of the time, was criticised in his own day for its prosaic character. Spenser, however, in a letter to Harvey promised a long poem, which he dares "undertake will be very profitable for the knowledge", of material even more pedestrian than Daniel's. He was to describe the Thames and contiguous country and "all of the rivers throughout England" — "a work . . . of much labor", to be furthered by consulting the researches of Master Holinshed (Smith, i, 100). Cp. Warner's *Albion's England* and Drayton's *Polyolbion*.

<sup>35</sup> Cp. also Prologue *Henry VIII*:

Such as give  
Their money out of hope they may believe,  
May here find truth . . . . .  
Think ye see  
The very persons of our noble story  
As they were living; think you see them great,  
And follow'd with the general throng and sweat  
Of thousand friends; then, in a moment, see  
How soon this mightiness meets misery.

<sup>36</sup> Epist. Ded., *Works* (1875), ii, 237.

<sup>37</sup> Pref. *Iliad*, Smith, ii, 300, 306. Cp. Elyot: "There is no lesson for a young gentleman to be compared with Homer", whose works contain "incomparable wisdoms, and instructions for politic governance of people" (*Governor*, Bk. I, chap. x, pp. 58, 60).

the most questionable authors. This, however, was done with cautious qualifications, for in such a doctrine lurked danger; and the critics were united in strongest condemnation of the immoral perversions of the art of poetry by irresponsible contemporary rimesters. Indeed, it is clear that emphasis upon the high didactic function of poetry is often impelled by a desire to discredit the work of such men and differentiate it from that of real poets.<sup>38</sup> In other words, when the demoralization and disintegration of poetry was threatened by the participation in the art of a multitude of reckless and profligate poetasters, critics naturally sought by emphasizing the didactic values of poetry in the hands of true poets to protect and save it as an art.

The insistence on the didactic value of poetry, however, was clearly based upon broad and genuine moral and cultural enthusiasm. Critics in the days of Elizabeth felt that poetry might be a powerful force in the life of the nation; if abused a force for evil, but potentially a repository of highest ideals and possessing tremendous possibilities for good. If the art could be saved from perversion it might be made highly efficacious as a means by which Englishmen could avail themselves of the best in renaissance culture and without moral detriment extend their intellectual and spiritual horizon. Protected from moral degradation and decadence while being developed in power and beauty of artistic expression, poetry might become at once a most potent instrument for cultural advancement and for the preservation of moral integrity. Didactic and ethical values, moreover, were more poetical to the average pre-puritan Elizabethan than has been possible since, and in the idealistic temper of the age, reformation and renaissance influences being not yet divorced, men of

<sup>38</sup> Among others Bishop Hall, the satirist, reprehends the ribaldry, vulgarity, and "lewd liberty" of English poets of the time (Bk. I, Satire IX). Verses expressing an ideal of a "perfect poet" — reminding one of Milton's saying that a poet "ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and most honorable things" — are quoted from the *Mirror for Magistrates* in *England's Parnassus*:

For who that will a perfect poet be,  
He must be bred out of Medusae's blood,  
He must be chaste and virtuous as was she,  
Who to her power the ocean-god withstood.  
To th' end also his doom be just and good,  
He must, as she, look rightly with one eye,  
Truth to regard, ne write one thing awry.

Ben Jonson (Ded. *Volpone*) also asserts the "impossibility of any man's being the good poet, without first being a good man."

letters, exalting poetry and in chivalric spirit associating with it a lofty ethical tone, felt no conflict between idealized didactic purpose and entire freedom in the use of beautiful imagery and expression. In their liberalized didacticism, which ethically idealized the poetry of the ancients yet fought jealously against the moral perversion of poetry by the moderns; and in their moralized estheticism, which in a worshipful spirit of esthetic and moral idealism exalted the unity of beauty and truth, the critics saw in poetry at its best the strongest possible agency for the intellectual and spiritual development of men.

#### V. THE ESTHETIC FUNCTION OF POETRY

The English sense of beauty notably manifested in the poetry of the age of Elizabeth also found expression from the beginning of the period in critical appreciation of artistic excellence and in recognition of the high importance of the esthetic function of poetic art. Queen Elizabeth herself doubtless exerted a strong influence in furtherance of this aspect of poetry, not only because of the chivalric and romantic sentiment that invested her as a center of poetic inspiration, but also, as her learned tutor Ascham proudly affirms, because she possessed a refined taste and delicate appreciation of the beauties of literature, her penetrating judgment accurately discriminating between bad and good, "immediately rejecting the one with disgust and receiving the other with highest delight."<sup>1</sup> With the growing cultural activity of the period, authors, printers, and critics give increasing attention to the artistic merits and the pleasure-giving function of poetry. Arthur Golding, though a puritanic spirit and recommending his translation of Ovid as morally edifying, also extols its esthetic values, finding it "a work very pleasant and delectable," "containing fine inventions to delight," and in consideration of its beauty expressing his belief that

A plain or naked tale or story simply told . . . .  
Makes not the hearer so attent to print it in his heart,  
As when the thing is well declared, with pleasant terms and  
art.<sup>2</sup>

Covert allegory is to Golding as to others<sup>3</sup> not only a source of ethical benefit but also of esthetic delight; just as the body has "joy in pleasant

<sup>1</sup> *Whole Works*, i, i, 192.

<sup>2</sup> Pref. to Reader.

<sup>3</sup> Gascoigne and Puttenham speak of allegory as a sort of figure, regarding it as an esthetic device, ornamental and pleasure-giving. The recognition of an esthetic

smells and sights" so the mind takes delight in the abundant hoards packed in poetry and skillfully hidden from all but a few. Thomas Phaer gives as one of the purposes of his translation of Virgil (1555) the "honest recreation" of the nobility.<sup>4</sup> George Turbervile offers his gentle reader a few sonnets "to pleasure and recreate thy weary mind and troubled head withal."<sup>5</sup> The *Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), "right delicate and delightful,"

Wherein you may to recreate the mind,  
Such fine inventions find for your delight,

is especially commended by A. M. to all young gentlemen as a "gallery of delights" with "dainties deckt" in hope to please their "longing minds."<sup>6</sup> Thomas Churchyard boldly recommends poetry for the giving of pleasure, commending his "Light Bundle of lively discourses called Churchyard's Charge" (1580), "set forth as a piece of pastime," as "delightful to the reader."<sup>7</sup> Clement Robinson puts forth *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584), and R. S. *The Phanix Nest* (1593), "full of . . . singular delight." Nicholas Breton frankly advertises his *Toys of an Idle Head* (1582) as "very pleasant and delectable to pass away idle time withal,"<sup>8</sup> and the title of his *Bower of Bliss*, like many poetic titles of the time, expresses esthetic motive and appeal.

Compared with these recommendations of the delights of poetry, Sir Philip Sidney's observations are much more deeply significant. His conception of esthetic values in poetry attaches great importance to the power of the art in the lives of men through its appeal to the emotions. This view, it appears, results not only from his thinking but as well from his experience as a poet. The usual procedure of "turning other's leaves" for inspiration, "studying inventions fine," proving vain,

"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."<sup>9</sup>

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as well as ethical value in allegory by men of letters under renaissance influence, is an interesting manifestation of their sense of the intimate relationship of these two values in life and art.

<sup>4</sup> Warton's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iv, 221.

<sup>5</sup> To the Reader; *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs and Sonnets*, etc. (1567); Collier's Reprints, v. Painter recommends the stories in his *Palace of Pleasure* as profitable and also "pleasant they be, for that they recreate and refresh wearied minds".

<sup>6</sup> *Heliconia*, p. ix.

<sup>7</sup> Collier's Reprints, vi.

<sup>8</sup> *Heliconia*, i.

<sup>9</sup> *Astrophel and Stella*, I.

Like Burns he realizes the necessity of "nature's fire"—that it is the high function of the poet to "touch the heart" and that to move others he must himself feel. His excuse for being a poet is that he was "overmastered" by his thoughts. The emotional and poetical *Arcadia* was written because his many fancies must be "in some way delivered." Ardent personal emotion is the source of his poetical expression and the reason for its power. He is conscious of this fact and like Burns and Wordsworth promulgates it as critical doctrine.

According to Sidney's view it is chiefly through the esthetic potency of poetry that its didactic and cultural possibilities are to be realized. By its delights poetry affords that "pleasure in the exercise of the mind" which begets knowledge. The poet is superior to the philosopher because the latter's "wordish description" does not "strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth." The philosopher, scorning to delight, must "be content little to move" and the "force of delight" being barred him, the poet "for moving" leaves him far behind.<sup>10</sup> Poetry by its "charming sweetness" has power to draw the rudest men "to an admiration of knowledge," their "hard dull wits" being "softened and sharpened" by its "sweet delights."<sup>11</sup> Its gentle influence steals into the hearts of rough, hard-hearted men before they are aware, and it will be "as if they took a medicine of cherries." The poet not only shows the way but gives such a "sweet prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter it"; for "he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchancing skill of music; and with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner. And pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 164, 173, 181.

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 151, 153. Cp. Lodge: "Whatso they wrote, it was to this purpose, in the way of pleasure to draw men to wisdom" (Smith, i, 66).

<sup>12</sup> *Ib.*, 172, 173. With this passage compare Rosaline's praise of Biron (*Love's Labor's Lost*, II, i, 72):

Which his fair tongue, conceit's expositor,  
Delivers in such apt and gracious words  
That aged ears play truant at his tales,  
And younger hearings are quite ravished;  
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.

And Biron's words on the poet inspired by love (IV, iii, 348):

O, then his lines would ravish savage ears  
And plant in tyrants mild humility.

In this vigorously beneficent esthetic force of poetry Sidney finds also a powerful incentive to action. Poetry, the companion of camps, is an art "not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage."<sup>13</sup> Infinite proofs might be alleged of its potency in moving men to acts of courage, courtesy, and liberality. Lyric poetry is especially "fit to awake the thoughts from the sleep of idleness, to embrace honorable enterprises." The songs of ancestral valor of Hungary, "that right soldier-like nation think the chiefest kindlers of brave courage." Even the barbarous old song of Percy and Douglas moves Sidney's own heart more than a trumpet. Heroical poetry, "the best and most accomplished kind," likewise has power to stir and inflame the mind and inspire men to noble living.<sup>14</sup> With its "planet-like music," its "heart-ravishing knowledge," its vivid and perfect pictures, poetry has an esthetic emotional force beyond anything in ordinary experience—"to move . . . the feigned may be turned to the highest key of passion." The poet with the "hand of delight doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art doth."<sup>15</sup>

Sidney considers it more fundamentally essential that poetry should please or move than that it should teach, placing the esthetic function higher than the didactic. "That moving," he affirms, "is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh the cause and effect of teaching. For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught? and what so much good doth that teaching bring forth . . . as that it moveth one to do that which it doth teach?"<sup>16</sup> The teachings of the philosopher are of little avail unless put into action by the moving power of poetry, a power that accomplishes the very important and practical result of inciting men to virtuous action, the end of living. "Without delight" men "would fly as from a

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 193. Cp. Nash: "The soldier, in hope to have his high deeds celebrated by their pens, despiseth a whole army of perils, and acteth wonders exceeding all human conjecture" (*Works*, McKerrow, i, 193).

<sup>14</sup> *Ib.*, 178, 179.

<sup>15</sup> *Ib.*, 169, 174.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.*, 171. Cp. Dryden (*Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1668): "I am satisfied if it cause delight, for delight is the chief if not the only end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy instructs only as it delights". And Shakespeare (*Taming of the Shrew*, I, i, 36):

Music and poesy use to quicken you . . .  
No profit grows, where is no pleasure ta'en.

stranger" from the teaching of goodness; "to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, *hoc opus, hic labor est.*"<sup>17</sup>

In the strength of the primarily esthetic appeal of poetry, however, Sidney finds danger of abuse; and "being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words."<sup>18</sup> But according to Sidney's conception of the intimate relationship and harmony between beauty and pleasure on the one hand and spiritual good on the other, the delightfulness of poetry may in itself be "virtue-breeding." True poetic beauty, he deems, with its power of intellectual and spiritual quickening, is necessarily an agency for goodness and a most potent means of disclosing and putting into operation the highest truths of life. With the right spirit on the part of the poet or reader, with a certain idealistic and chivalric attitude toward the esthetic qualities of poetry, these qualities are exalted and transmuted into the spiritual values of which they are the fitting expression.

Sidney's emphasis upon the emotional values of poetry might seem, as with Samuel Daniel and later with Wordsworth, to make the art universal and democratic. Indeed, in avowing these values in the old ballad of Percy and Douglas, he is broader than most of his contemporaries, who scorn such work as rude and barbarous. However, he thinks the ballad would be better "trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar,"<sup>19</sup> and does not differentiate it sharply from the work of the ballading rimesters of his own day whom he utterly refuses to recognize as eligible to the lofty calling of poet. With his high ideals of esthetic qualities he finds equally intolerable the "dainty wits," who "bravely masked" tell their fancies under the alleged inspiration of "the Sisters nine"; or "Pindar's apes" flaunting "in phrases fine"; poetical euphuists with their fantastic similes; or the conventional amorists who affect the far-fetched helps of "Petrarch's long-deceased woes."<sup>20</sup> Such superficial conceptions of poetic beauty are utterly inadequate for work which is essentially higher than that of the philosopher. Only those of true

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 172.

<sup>18</sup> *Ib.*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, 178

<sup>20</sup> *Astrophel and Stella*, XV. In several of the earlier sonnets in this sequence Sidney indicates clearly that in entering upon his own work he was consciously attempting to avoid and discredit the faults of those that he reprehends. Courthope (*Cambridge History*, iii, 276) thinks that Spenser in publishing his youthful *Hymns in Honor of Love and Beauty* (1595-6) was impelled by a similar motive, desiring "to oppose his influence, as far as he might, to the prevailing current of taste in poetry"

nobility of mind and soul are capable of the union of lofty moral conception and esthetic excellence demanded by the very nature and function of poetic art.

Spenser is evidently in close accord with the high esthetic ideals of Sidney. The esthetic spirit that underlies his correspondence with Gabriel Harvey and that prevails throughout his poetry is manifest in his first poetic venture, the *Shepherd's Calendar*. He had been interested in the schemes of classical versification of the Areopagus, in which there seemed the possibility of such an artistic improvement of English verse as would bring about a "surceasing and silence of bald rimers."<sup>21</sup> His own efforts toward this end, however, were chiefly in a different direction, the scorning and spewing out of the "rakehelly rout of ragged rimers,"<sup>22</sup> as far as he was concerned being initiated by the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* and furthered by other works not of the Areopagus stamp. And not only by his work did he seek to raise the poetic standard and discredit the rimesters; he also spoke his mind. In his October eclogue, for instance, he expresses his disgust at their performances, thrusting sharply at such "Tom Pipers" of poetry in "an ironical sarcasm spoken in derision of these rude wits."<sup>23</sup> He further voices his reprobation of the lowness and crudity of the versifiers in his *Tears of the Muses*, like Sidney feeling the utter inadequacy of the conception of poetry manifested by their work. And in the reform spirit of Sidney he is consistently exacting in his attitude toward the artistic qualities of his own work, his *Shepherd's Calendar* being published in evident trepidation, with careful explanations, and his *Faery Queen* being put forth with depreciation of its artistic merits as

Rude rimes, the which a rustic muse did weave  
In savage soil, far from Parnassus' mount.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Harvey, Smith, i, 89.

<sup>22</sup> E. K., Pref. *Shepherd's Calendar*. E. K. highly extols the superior esthetic merits of Spenser's poem, praising it for its "grace", "seemly simplicity", "compass of speech so delightful", and for the general "excellency" of its "gallant English verses", whose beauties he is anxious should not escape the reader. Nash in his preface to *Astrophel and Stella*, likewise chiefly on esthetic grounds, vaunts the superiority of Sidney's poetry and discredits the inferior work of others. The critics in general are energetic in praise and dispraise in their attempts to uphold and advance the artistic standard.

<sup>23</sup> E. K.'s Gloss.

<sup>24</sup> Sonnet prefixed to *F. Q.*

Although in his *Faery Queen* professing didactic and ethical aims, Spenser evidently comprehends in his purpose "to fashion a gentleman" a strong motive of esthetic culture. Moreover, he seeks to make his work "most plausible and pleasing," purposing to furnish what "men delight to read" and to conform in some measure at least to the taste of readers who demand what is "delightful and pleasing to the common sense."<sup>25</sup> He even exemplifies Sidney's saying that "those things which in themselves are horrible . . . are made in poetical imitation delightful."<sup>26</sup> But the motive of Spenser's estheticism is not merely artistic and cultural. His sense of beauty is strongly emotional and indeed has a religious basis. A worshiper of beauty from the "greener times" of his youth, he had then composed an "honorable" and "sacred" *Hymn in Honor of Beauty* in which he hoped that he

The ravisht hearts of gazeful men might rear  
To admiration of that heavenly light,  
From whence proceeds such soul-enchanting might.

In this poem he shows the divine origin and nature of earthly beauty. At the time of creation, "this world's great workmaster" had before him a "wondrous pattern" of "perfect Beauty, which all men adore"; and from this source is derived the beauty of earthly things, the dull earth, "through infusion of celestial power," being quickened with delight and made pleasing to the sight of man. Spenser, like Sidney, evidently has faith in this divine delight of the world and believes that one of the most potent means of entering into the minds and hearts of men is by appealing to their joyous sense of beauty through poetry. And according to his conception in the *Hymn*, the beauty of earthly forms is not merely external:

I that have often prov'd, too well it know . . . . .  
That beauty is not, as fond men misdeem,  
An outward show of things that only seem.

Nor merely external if the beauty of the delightful pictures by which the poet makes his appeal; bodying forth as they do his inspired imaginative conceptions, they are manifestations of a divinely bestowed inherent spiritual beauty. Neither is true beauty ephemeral, for, though the

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Raleigh. Spenser, knowing the taste of his readers for deep conceits and cloudy figures, doubtless valued the allegory itself for its esthetic as well as its ethical merits.

<sup>26</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 173.

outward show "shall turn to dust," the lamp from which the light of beauty emanates

Shall never be extinguisht nor decay . . . . .  
For it is heavenly born and cannot die.

So intimate and indissoluble is the relationship between beauteous forms and the spiritual force which animates them that fairest bodies on the earth are those that possess the most of heavenly light,—

For of the soul the body form doth take;  
For soul is form and doth the body make.<sup>27</sup>

And, though there may be exceptions, due to special causes, in general

All that fair is, is by nature good.

Thus, in Spenser's idealism, high moral feeling and high esthetic feeling are harmoniously unified; the virtues become romantically beautiful and beauty is exalted and spiritualized,—and poetry as the most adequate expression of this union becomes, as Sidney says, "virtue-breeding delightfulness."

"The perfect perfection of poetry," according to Webbe, "is this, to mingle delight with profit in such wise that a reader might by his reading be a partaker of both."<sup>28</sup> Webbe seems rather undecided, however, as to which of the two aims prescribed by Horace is the more fundamental. In one place he affirms that "the very ground of right poetry" is "to give profitable counsel, yet so it must be mingled with delight"; and again with something of historical retrospect he declares that "the very sum or chiefest essence of poetry did always for the most part consist in delighting the readers or hearers with pleasure, so, as the number of poets increased, they still inclined this way rather than the other, so that most of them had special regard to the pleasantness of their fine conceits, whereby they might draw men's minds into admiration of their inventions, more than they had to the profit or commodity that the readers should reap by their works."<sup>29</sup> In Webbe's mind, with its puritan proclivities, the two functions are apparently co-ordinate or separate, and not as in Spenser's conception harmoniously unified in one larger psychi-

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel Harvey says of Du Bartas, "His style addeth favor and grace to beauty and in a goodly body representeth a puissant soul" (Smith, ii, 266).

<sup>28</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 250. The mingling of "delight with profit" seems to have been particularly acceptable to Elizabethan temper. The later tendency to divorce this happy renaissance-reformation union was not well for poetry and drama.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 235, 251.

cal purpose. He does not, as did Spenser and Sidney, and in fact most of the critics, recognize the spiritual value of the esthetic element, which to him is a sort of sugar coating rather than an essential ingredient of poetry.

Indeed, although Webbe expresses some objection to superficial esthetic tendency, he is, by his own superficial conception and euphuistic predilections, actually in accord with it. His apprehension of esthetic values is limited largely to matters of external ornamentation, though he professes discrimination here and reprehends attempted garnishing that results in corrupting poetry "with fantastical errors." He warmly commends Phaer and Golding for their "beautifying of the English speech" and likewise praises Gabriel Harvey for his endeavors "to reform our English verse and to beautify the same with brave devices." Others whom he cannot mention individually are encouraged for their "dainty morsels and fine poetical inventions." If English poets could be persuaded to adopt classical versification he is sure that they would soon discredit "bald rimes" and "not stoop to the best of them all in all manner of ornament and comeliness."<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly enough, Webbe, notwithstanding his didactic bent, hesitatingly recognizes the principle of art for art's sake. Certain "illegible works and inventions" of the ancients he thinks "for their art sake, might obtain passage."<sup>31</sup> He is glad, however, that except for "a few bald ditties," not to be accounted poetry, English poetry is free from "such perilous pieces." Highly pleased with the "delightful vein" of Chaucer, Webbe deems that no poet could with "more pithy skill unfold such pleasant and delightful matters of mirth, as though they respected nothing but the telling of a merry tale."<sup>32</sup>

Puttenham's esthetic ideals are in general less superficial than those of Webbe. In his "censure" upon English poets he, like Webbe, honors the poets who have by their studies "beautified our English tongue" and "polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesy from that it had been before." Gower, though affording "good and grave moralities," he condemns for his homeliness of verse, deficiencies of style, and "small subtilty" of invention. The beauties to be found in Wyatt and Surrey, however, evoke his enthusiastic praise, and he has good words for others,

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 245, 262, 279.

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, 255.

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, 251. E. K. also extols Chaucer's power to please (*Gloss*, February eclogue, *Shepherd's Calendar*), "whose praise for pleasant tales cannot die, so long as . . . the name of poetry shall endure".

among them Sir Walter Raleigh, whose "vein" he finds "most lofty, insolent, and passionate." Naturally, the Queen's "delicate, noble muse easily surmounteth all . . . for sense, sweetness, and subtilty."<sup>33</sup>

Puttenham lays stress upon the ways in which poetry appeals to the senses. It is "a kind of music," "a musical speech or utterance,"<sup>34</sup> possessing harmony and melody, "pleasing the ear" by its "congruity in sounds," its metrical effects contributing largely to its power of affording pleasure. Its language must be "sweet and civil" with "choice of words and phrases"; its sense appeal must be heightened by "figurative conveyance." In "pleasant manner of utterance" it should vary "from the ordinary of purpose to refresh the mind by the ear's delight."<sup>35</sup>

The esthetic function of poetry is not satisfied, however, if the harmonies and felicities of style do nothing more than please the senses. These features must "delight and allure as well the mind." Indeed, "ornament poetical is of two sorts according to the double virtue and efficacy of figures . . . one to satisfy and delight the ear only by a goodly outward show set upon the matter with words and speeches smoothly and tunably running, another by certain intendments or sense

<sup>33</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 62, 64, 66.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, 67. Cp. *Passionate Pilgrim*, l. 103:

If music and sweet poetry agree,  
As needs they must, the sister and the brother . . .  
One god is god of both, as poets feign.

Hazlitt ("Milton") says that in "L'Allegro" the poet has "given us the theory of his versification" —

Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse,  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
In notes with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out . . .  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony.

Sidney declares poetry to be "the only fit speech for music — music, I say, the most divine striker of the senses" (*Apology*, Smith, i, 182).

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, 9, 24.

of such words and speeches inwardly working a stir to the mind."<sup>36</sup> Evidently, since the mind is refreshed by the "ear's delight," the two sorts of ornament by the double efficacy of figures combine to awaken and direct the thoughts and feelings of men by an appeal made largely through their esthetic senses. By its "sweet and eloquent persuasion," poetry has power to enter and mollify "hard and stony hearts." With its melodies, its sweet and civil utterance, its "fresh colors and figures," it "inveigleth the judgment of man, and carrieth his opinion this way and that, whithersoever the heart by impression of the ear shall be most affectionately bent and directed."<sup>37</sup> Thus Puttenham, as a self-constituted exponent of the art of poetry and a lover of English culture, not only exalts beauty—that quality which exerted such a powerful influence on Elizabethan life and which so notably distinguishes Elizabethan poetry—but also, like Sidney and Spenser, recognizes the intimate relationship between sensuous and spiritual beauty and the reinforced psychical power resulting from their happy unification in poetry.

A further phase of the esthetic function recognized by Puttenham is that by which poetry becomes a means of giving vent to the emotions and of solacing the heart. "To rejoice and take our pleasures in virtuous and honest sort," he thinks, "is not only allowable but also necessary and very natural to man." The larger "joys and consolations of the heart" demand utterance, and since it is natural and advantageous that men should communicate and share such emotions, "therefore nature and civility have ordained . . . rejoicings for the recreation and comfort of many." This has given rise to various forms of "poetical rejoicings" such as poems on victories, coronations, marriages, and births, and, further, poems giving expression to "the amorous affections," and others in praise of the gods.<sup>38</sup> Although the subject-matter of poetry should not be unworthy, vain or foolish, yet "merry matters" may be used for man's solace and recreation.<sup>39</sup> A legitimate purpose

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*, 148. Cp. Thomas Wilson's theory that figures were invented to "cause delight: to refresh with pleasure and quicken with grace the dulness of man's brain" (Warton's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iv, 162).

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*, 8. Cp. Dryden (Pref. *Tyrannic Love*, 1669): "By the harmony of words we elevate the mind to a sense of devotion, as our solemn music, which is inarticulate poesy, does in churches".

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*, 46, 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ib.*, 24. Cp. Spenser, verses prefixed to *F. Q.*, to Lord Hatton:

So Maro oft did Caesar's cares allay.  
So you, great lord, that with your counsel sway

of the art is "the consolation and repose of temperate minds: finally, the common solace of mankind in all his travails and cares of this transitory life; and in this last sort, being used for recreation only, may allowably bear matter not always of the gravest or of any great commodity or profit, but rather in some sort vain, dissolute, or wanton, so it be not very scandalous and of evil example."<sup>40</sup>

The function of poetry as an outlet of the emotions Puttenham finds to be applicable also to the expression of sorrow and grief, and human instinct for self-expression gives rise to "poetical lamentations." Here, too, there is pleasure, the esthetics of sorrow, for although "lamenting is altogether contrary to rejoicing . . . yet it is a piece of joy to be able to lament with ease, and freely to pour forth a man's inward sorrows and the griefs wherewith his mind is surcharged." The grief itself is made in part a "cure of the disease" by this "very necessary device of the poet." Extending the application of the idea still farther, Puttenham affirms that in a similar manner arose the "poesy by which men did use to reproach their enemies," which served as "a mean to rid the gall of all such vindictive men" and afforded "great easement to the boiling stomach." Men "must needs utter their spleens in all ordinary matters also, or else it seemed their bowels would burst: therefore the poet devised a pretty fashioned poem" called *Epigramma*.<sup>41</sup> Thus, according to Puttenham's view, different forms or kinds of poetry take their origin in the necessity of giving utterance to the different phases of human emotion; and it is easy to see how in his conception the external esthetic qualities, determined largely by the nature of the feeling to be expressed, are intimately related to inner spiritual qualities and make an important contribution to the sum total of emotional and psychical effect.

This differentiation of poetic forms according to the various emotions to be expressed is in harmony with Puttenham's doctrine of decorum; for by this doctrine poetic form and style should be adapted to the varying kinds of subject-matter. Moreover, Puttenham deems that the subject-matter of poetry represents not only different human emotions but also different values or degrees of rank; and apparently transferring

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The burden of this kingdom mightily,  
With like delights sometimes may eke delay  
The rugged brow of careful Policy.

<sup>40</sup> *Ib.*, 25.

<sup>41</sup> *Ib.*, 49, 56, 60.

to poetry the ideas of distinction obtaining in the aristocratic social system with which he was familiar, he divides poetic subject-matter into "high," "mean," and "base and low." There should be a corresponding adaptation of style, every subject being set forth in its "degree and decency." Furthermore, in accordance with the demands of decorum, the form and style of poetry should be adapted to different classes of readers, these classes presumably differing in esthetic sensibility. A poet should discriminate "and not give such music to the rude and barbarous, as he would to the learned and delicate ear."<sup>42</sup>

Puttenham's court experience, it seems, as well as his solicitous desire to uplift and refine English poetry, gave a decidedly aristocratic bent to his esthetic ideals. He would lift up "vulgar poesy" and make it seemly in the sight of the court by having it clad in such "kindly clothes and colors" as would conceal its naked limbs and elevate it above the "common course of ordinary speech and capacity of the vulgar judgment." Poetry "being artificially handled must needs yield . . . much more beauty and commendation"; therefore, nakedness and baldness should be covered and bedecked, and all that savors of crudeness and barbarism should be eliminated by such attention to decorum, proportion, cadence, and ornament as would make the art "decenter and more agreeable to any civil ear and understanding."<sup>43</sup> Poets should rise above the popular taste for matters of tavern minstrels, including such "stories of old time as the tale of Sir Thopas, Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwick, Adam Bell, and Clymme of the Clough, and such other old romances or historical rimes, made purposely for the recreation of the common people." In their "courtly ditties" writers should avoid practices that "smatch more of the school of common players than of any delicate poet, lyric or elegiac,"<sup>44</sup> and banish utterly "measures pleasing only to the popular ear." Such were the esthetic ideals voiced by Puttenham and other reformers and furtherers of English poetry, and, though the popular ear was not neglected, poets rose to the occasion, and the requirements of the most cultured and fastidious taste ought to have been richly satisfied.

Nash shows by the testimony of Cicero that ancient poets, in order to allure men to learning, attached much importance to esthetic qualities, giving attention in their poetry chiefly to two things, "sweetness of

<sup>42</sup> *Ib.*, 91, 158.

<sup>43</sup> *Ib.*, 143.

<sup>44</sup> *Ib.*, 87, 132.

verse and variety of invention"<sup>45</sup>—in other words, making their work delightful by its harmony and melody and by its "witty fiction." For such qualities he commends his contemporary Peele as "the chief supporter of pleasance now living."<sup>46</sup> The artistic merits of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* also evoke his most enthusiastic praise. His esthetic interest, however, is not constructive and is expressed chiefly in his denunciations of the rude rimers who with their "jarring verse" alienate men from the delights of poetry. This "ravenous rabble" he earnestly desires to suppress. Although hating puritans, he finds the chief menace to poetry to come rather from "ignorant artificers," "impudent incipients," who are an obloquy to art and whose "ragged rimes," breeding detestation and disgracing English poetry, he heartily wishes might by public edict be prohibited. Such blockhead poets, "the stain of art," it was that Plato excluded from his Commonwealth.<sup>47</sup>

Sir John Harington gives esthetic values a subordinate place. He recognizes, however, the esthetic merits of verse, one of the "good uses" being "the pleasure and sweetness to the ear which makes the discourse pleasant unto us often time when the matter itself is harsh and unacceptable." Indeed the sweetness of the verse and the "pleasant and pretty fiction" of poetry may be considered sufficient ends for such readers as are not able to enter into the moral sense or allegory.<sup>48</sup> Harington also agrees with Sir Philip Sidney that the pleasure-giving qualities of poetry may have the important effect of softening and polishing the "hard and rough dispositions of men," making them "capable of virtue and good discipline."<sup>49</sup> Notwithstanding his allegorical bias—doubtless enhanced by his desire to gain favor for his author—Harington, in excusing the wantonness of Ariosto's characters on the ground of decorum and in delighting in their portrayal, comes near recognizing the principle of art for art's sake.<sup>50</sup>

The various expositions of verse and the verse controversies and experiments all through this period were impelled largely by esthetic motives and interests. In the controversy between Campion and Daniel, rime is condemned on esthetic grounds and on esthetic grounds

<sup>45</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 328.

<sup>46</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 319.

<sup>47</sup> *Anatomy of Absurdity*, Smith, i, 327, 328.

<sup>48</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 203, 206.

<sup>49</sup> *Ib.*, 197.

<sup>50</sup> *Ib.*, 209, 215.

defended and praised. Campion, like others, finds that it "offends the ear with tedious affectation";<sup>51</sup> while Daniel rejoins that "our rime . . . doth add more grace, and hath more of delight than ever bare numbers . . . can possibly yield"; "delighting the ear, stirring the heart, and satisfying the judgment."<sup>52</sup>

Daniel, like Puttenham, recognizes the emotional power of the melody and beauty of poetry, but in so doing in defense of rime he manifests a more philosophically democratic spirit than any of the previous critics. He declares that if the barbarians use rime "then it shows that it sways the affection of the barbarian: if civil nations practice it, it proves that it works upon the hearts of civil nations: if all, then that it hath a power in nature on all." Taking a broad, pragmatic view of the esthetic aspect of poetry he asserts, with something of the sweeping ardor of Sidney, that "whatsoever force of words doth move, delight, and sway the affections of men . . . is true number, measure, eloquence, and the perfection of speech"; "suffer then the world to enjoy that which it knows, and what it likes."<sup>53</sup>

The poetry of the English people, in Daniel's view, possesses a mysterious excellence of its own which is the natural expression of the poetic spirit of the race, a sort of spontaneous outpouring of melody and beauty in song according to the inherent promptings of nature. Free alike from the apprehensive distrust of barbarism and the constraining bonds of classicism, Daniel's conception of esthetic values is open to a frank recognition of poetic beauty in whatever condition or form it manifests itself. He possesses the taste, insight, and freedom of spirit to enter into a liberal appreciation of the noble lyric verse that following native instinct and genius, enhanced and refined by foreign influence, became the most characteristic and most beautiful expression of the greatest period of English poetic art.

The quest of esthetic perfection, exuberantly reflected in the life and literature of this period, is likewise evidently a strong motive in the poetic criticism, wherein great interest is shown in all that would refine and beautify English poetry and enhance its charm and power. Upon this interest rests the large body of criticism devoted to matters of form and style as well as that dealing with the more spiritual and philosophical aspects of esthetic values. Persistent, enthusiastic effort is given to the

<sup>51</sup> *Observations*, Smith, ii, 330.

<sup>52</sup> *Defense of Rime*, *ib.*, 360, 362.

<sup>53</sup> *Ib.*, 361, 363.

task of elevating standards of poetic beauty and of making available such full knowledge of artistic devices as would make possible the realization of highest perfection. Participating in the renaissance homage of culture, the critics felt that in poetry lay the greatest possibilities for cultural advancement. If these possibilities were to be realized, however, if poetry was to attain and preserve its merited distinction as an exponent of culture, it must be jealously guarded from the perversions of vulgar taste and crude artistry, and its development consigned to men of high ideals, real poetic talent, and knowledge of best models and principles.

In addition to their interest in the esthetic development of poetry as a means and exponent of culture and as a source of national glory, the critics show a due realization of the esthetic element as a source of pleasure and solace and of spiritual uplift in the lives of men. They find in poetry delight to the mind and heart, satisfaction to the sense of beauty; a refuge from trouble and a balm for sorrow, as is exemplified in the Arcadianism and pastoralism of their day; and an outlet for emotions of joy, as exemplified in the rich and spontaneous outpouring of song. Their sense of emotional values is strong; especially is this true of Sidney and Spenser and those most closely in touch with the ideals that animated their work. Poetic expression, they deem, is warranted by genuine poetic feeling, and they find that the emotional exaltation that unifies and harmonizes external and spiritual beauty gives poetry an irresistible charm and power as a quickening and uplifting force in human life. Applying to poetry a chivalric worship of beauty, they idealize its sensuous charms as symbolical of perfect graces and truths to be perceived only by the eyes of the mind. Such a spirit helps to account for the pure and noble lyrics from men of aberrant lives. Christopher Marlowe, for instance, not only compasses the heights of poetic expression but eulogizes the beauty of poetic art with religious-like fervor.<sup>64</sup> Such a spirit seems

<sup>64</sup> What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?  
If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
Their minds, and muses, on admired themes;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit;  
If these had made one poem's period,  
And all combined in beauty's worthiness;  
Yet should there hover in their restless heads

to make the visions of esthetic delights of the *Arcadia* and the *Faery Queen* of spiritual significance to their authors and readers similar to that obtained by men of a later period from the visions of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The embodiments of physical and spiritual beauty which appear illusory to generations this side of the Renaissance were apparently real and vitalizing to the comprehensive idealism of the Elizabethans. Suffer their world to enjoy what it knows and what it likes. In the thought of such men as Sidney and Spenser, in whom there is a happy blending of reformation spirit with the spirit of renaissance, high esthetic feeling takes its place beside high moral feeling. According to their pre-puritan conception, the excitement of lofty and pleasurable emotions by an appeal to the senses and the imagination exalts the soul and opens the mind to the apprehension of truth and to the interpretation of beauty as truth and virtue, poetry in their estimation affording the best means for the accomplishment of this beneficent result and for putting it into active operation in the life of man. For "virtue is made strong by beauty's might"<sup>55</sup>—and it is

True that true beauty virtue is indeed.<sup>56</sup>

The force of renaissance spirit, gently tempered by puritanism, was such in this period as successfully to combat the error that the esthetic element in poetry is detached, external, merely decorative. And Elizabethan poetry, as well as Elizabethan criticism, in general reflects the triumph of the principle that beauty like virtue is fundamental and inherent. The later puritan influence largely subverts this principle, and, though it was reaffirmed on a more superficial basis by Addison and Shaftsbury in the eighteenth century and promulgated by Keats and Ruskin in the nineteenth century, its genuine acceptance, its power in English poetry, has never been so great as in the days of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare.

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One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least,  
Which into words no virtue can digest.

—First Part of *Tamburlaine*, V, ii.

<sup>55</sup> *Astrophel and Stella*, XLVIII.

<sup>56</sup> *Ib.*, V.

## FORM

### I. STYLE AND FIGURE

Many influences conspired to excite in Elizabethan critics an active interest in all matters of poetic form and style. Poetry was a natural center and exponent of the spirit of cultural progress and of the growing sense of esthetic values ministered to by contact with renaissance and classical literature; and study and imitation in behalf of poetry naturally resulted in directing large attention to the formal elements of the art. The heightened sense of artistic merits stimulated the spirit of national emulation and strengthened the determination to overcome the reproach of outward crudity and barbarism. Moreover, the love of distinction, which in the social life of the time usually sought by elaboration, adornment, and general elegance to enhance social and class differentiation, when turned to poetry frequently took the course of style and ornamentation. Thus, while in theory the critics in general declare form to be subordinate to matter and while the best critics withstand superficial stylistic tendencies, yet the critical treatises of the period—attempting to meet practical needs—are often devoted largely to the more tangible and teachable features of poetry, although these are sometimes philosophically treated.

The figurative element of style, conspicuous in the poetry of the time, naturally received a great deal of consideration from the critics; and the rhetoricians of the early part of the period, devoting much attention to figures of speech, began in England a study that has held prominent place down to the present day. Thomas Wilson in his famous *Art of Rhetoric* promotes this feature of poetic art, affirming that "figures . . . . were invented to avoid satiety, and cause delight: to refresh with pleasure and quicken with grace the dulness of man's brain." And using a figure that smacks slightly of euphuism to enforce his thought, he adds, "Who will look on a white wall an hour together where no workmanship is at all? Or who will eat still one kind of meat and never desire change?"<sup>1</sup> Wilson, however, is conservative toward matters of ornament, especially toward borrowings of finery from Italy, though he is philosophically open-minded in attempting to account for the penchant of his contemporaries for "far-fetcht and translated"

<sup>1</sup> Warton's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, iv, 162.

(i. e. metaphorical) terms. He thinks that either "men count it a point of wit" to use these instead of "such words as are at hand," "or else it is because the hearer is led by cogitation upon rehearsal of a metaphor, and thinketh more by remembrance of a word translated than is there expressly spoken; or else because the whole matter seemeth by a similitude to be opened: or, last of all, because every translation is commonly and for the most part referred to the senses of the body, and especially to the sense of seeing, which is the sharpest and quickest above all other."<sup>2</sup>

Ascham, though like Wilson and like his master Sir John Cheke frowning upon over-elaboration, is much interested in matters of style, and commends the diligent attention of Elizabeth by which she was enabled to appreciate the niceties of style "in Greek, Latin, or English prose or verse." Doubtless expressing his own ideals he declares that "she approved a style chaste in its propriety and beautiful by perspicuity; and she greatly admired metaphors when not too violent, and antitheses when just, and happily opposed."<sup>3</sup> Ascham's exhortations for a more diligent and discriminating study of imitation are also prompted largely by his interest in the perfection of style, an interest fostered by his zealous devotion to the ancient classics.

The refinement of English poetic style by the work of the courtly makers Wyatt and Surrey, though not divulged in print for the benefit of their own age, is duly recognized and proclaimed by Tottel in 1557 and is commended by almost every critic thereafter down through the reign of Elizabeth. Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid ten years later also receives credit as a contribution to the ornamentation and refinement of poetry, Golding himself making strictures against "a plain or naked tale or story simply told," insisting on "pleasant terms and art," and praising the delights of allegory, which he, like Hawes, evidently regards as an ornamental as well as didactic feature.

<sup>2</sup> See F. I. Carpenter's *Metaphor and Simile in Minor Elizabethan Drama*, pp. 164-5. Among the other rhetorical treatises of the time were Richard Sherry's *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1555) and William Fulwood's *Enemy of Idleness* (1568), both devoted largely to "illustrative passages from ancient and modern authors" (Smith, i, 422). Ascham observes with satisfaction that Erasmus in his reading of Greek and Latin authors noted down "all similitudes" and made his book *Similia* (Smith, i, 17).

<sup>3</sup> Letter to John Sturm (1550), *Whole Works*, I, i, 192, — transl. L. Aikin, i, 95. Elizabeth's admiration for metaphors and antitheses, possibly not so chastened as Ascham interprets it, no doubt afforded incitement to efforts by John Lyly and others unpleasing to the taste of Sidney. Lyly extols "her wit so sharp . . . the apt answers, the subtle questions, the fine speeches, the pithy sentences" (*Euphues and his England*, Arber, p. 459).

Gascoigne advises the poet to frame his "style to perspicacity and to be sensible, for the haughty obscure verse doth not much delight"; though on the other hand verse that is too plain and "easy is like a tale of a roasted horse." He strongly recommends figures and tropes, but finds it difficult to give examples showing how to use them. If it were a case of praising a gentlewoman, he suggests a better way than commending her "crystal eye" or "cherry lip, etc."; or if one should wish to disclose his "pretense of love" he might discover his "disquiet in shadows *per allegoriam*,"<sup>4</sup> or use the most covert means possible "to avoid the uncomely customs of common writers." Whatsoever theme a poet takes in hand he should "study for some depth of device in the invention, and some figures also in the handling thereof," for otherwise "it will appear to the skillful reader but a tale of a tub." The same figures or tropes may be used "in verse which are used in prose," and in Gascoigne's judgment "they serve more aptly and have greater grace in verse than they have in prose."<sup>5</sup> In publishing his *Posies* (1575), however, Gascoigne is somewhat discouraged at the lack of recognition accorded fine conceits and poetical figures, for he finds that slow-witted English readers, not so apt as Ascham declared Elizabeth to be, often misinterpret such graces of style or show a lamentable lack of appreciation. "Of a truth, my good gallants," he complains in his preface, "there are such as having only learned to read English, interpret Latin, Greek, French and Italian phrases or metaphors, even according to their own motherly conceptions and childish skill."

The embarrassment of efforts toward the refinement of poetic style due to the uncultivated taste of readers was doubtless soon remedied by the further publication of such works as *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576), *A Banquet of Dainty Conceits* (1588), and *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), all, and especially this last, being devised "by studious toil," "garnished and decked with divers dainty devices," fraught "with phrases fine," and "trimmed" with all possible skill and learning for the delight of readers, particularly "all young gentlemen."<sup>6</sup> Verily, "as God giveth life unto man: so a poet giveth ornament unto

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Puttenham (Smith, ii, 160, 184): "The figure *allegoria*, which . . . we call the courtier or figure of fair semblant", — "your allegory by a duplicity of meaning or dissimulation under covert and dark intendments".

<sup>5</sup> *Notes of Instruction*, Smith, i, 48-53. Puttenham thinks that verse has the advantage over prose of "figurative conveyance", "all manner of fresh colors and figures" not allowed at least in "ordinary prose" (Smith, ii, 8, 9).

<sup>6</sup> *Heliconia*, p. ix.

it";<sup>7</sup> and after experience with these works, readers, upon meeting such dainty devices as Spenser's expression of the passing of three months,

Now hath fair Phoebe, with her silver face,  
Thrice seen the shadows of this nether world,<sup>8</sup>

would surely understand and be delighted.

A growing consciousness of style and concern for it is manifested in the prefatory remarks of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Thomas Blenerhasset (1578) recognizes—as Shakespeare did later (sonnet xxxii)—the advance in refinement of poetic style, and excuses apparent lack of polish in the style of the *Mirror* on the ground of decorum, thinking it not "decent that the men of the old world should speak with so garnished a style as they of the later time."<sup>9</sup> Thomas Newton, in the edition of 1587, also shows a realization of increasing exactions of taste on the part of readers which he is confident the *Mirror* will satisfy.

So books that now their faces dare to show,  
Must mettled be with nature and with skill:  
For nature causes stuff enough to flow,  
And art the same contrives by learned quill  
In order good, and current method still.<sup>10</sup>

E. K.<sup>11</sup> heralds with enthusiasm as a notable advance of style in English poetry the work of the "new poet" of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, whom he commends for "his wittiness in devising, his pithiness in uttering," his "seemly simplicity," his "due observing of decorum everywhere," the knitting of his words "so short and intricate, and the whole period and compass of speech so delightful for the roundness, and so grave for the strangeness." He is disturbed, however, by the

<sup>7</sup> Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 312.

<sup>8</sup> *Faery Queen*, II, iii, 44. Such refinement would not be joked about as it was with Chaucer (*Franklin's Tale*, 288-291):

Til that the brighte sonne lost his hewe,  
For thorisonte has reft the sonne his lyght, —  
This is as muche to seye, as it was nyght.

<sup>9</sup> Haslewood ed., i, 350.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 13. Sidney accounts the work "meetly furnished of beautiful parts"; and Edward Hake commends its "stately-proportioned vein of the heroic style" (Smith, i, 196, 226).

<sup>11</sup> Epist. Ded. *Shepherd's Calendar*.

fear that the new poet's beauties and excellencies will not be appreciated and complains bitterly of those who, like blind moles being themselves unable to see and understand such merits, straightway deem all "to be senseless and not at all to be understood." Still more shameful are those currish dogs in the manger who have such "base regard and bastard judgment, that they will not only themselves not labor to garnish and beautify" their native speech but also repine that it should be embellished by others. But E. K. has faith in the power of his author and, reiterating his praises and declaring that "what in most English writers useth to be loose, and as it were ungirt, in this author is well grounded, finely framed, and strongly trussed up together," he takes much satisfaction in the thought that the work will utterly discredit the inferior productions of the jangling, boastful rimesters and set a new standard for English poetry.

This differentiation of his work from that of other and inferior writers seems to have been what Spenser himself most desired. Wishing to establish a new standard of poetic style and taste, he deprecates the crudeness of contemporary versifiers and sets for himself the most fastidious ideals, fearing lest his *Shepherd's Calendar* might seem "too base for his excellent lordship," apologizing for the rudeness of his rustic muse in the *Faery Queen*, and excusing the simple device and mean composition of his *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. There is more than convention in this modesty and this exaltation of poetic standards, and Spenser's scorn for the manglers of poetry with their foolish rimes,

Without regard, or due decorum kept,<sup>12</sup>

is evidently genuine; he was interested not only in his own success but also in the elevation of the poetic art of his nation.

Gabriel Harvey, Spenser's early literary counselor, expresses ideals of poetic style that reflect his aristocratic pedantry. Spenser's *Dreams* he likes "passingly well . . . because they savor of that singular extraordinary vein" that he "ever fancied most, and in a manner admired only, in . . . all the most delicate and fine conceited Grecians and Italians." The special reason for his admiration, revealing his general attitude, is that he finds the "chiefest endeavor and drift" of these writers "was to have nothing vulgar," but rather everything "in lively hyperbolical amplifications, rare, quaint, and odd in every point, and . . . a degree or two . . . above the reach

<sup>12</sup> *Tears of the Muses*, l. 214.

and compass of a common scholar's capacity."<sup>13</sup> Thus Harvey wrote to Spenser at the beginning of the latter's literary career. Twelve years later his ideals had not changed: "The right novice of pregnant and aspiring conceit," he writes, "will not overskip any precious gem of invention or any beautiful flower of elocution that may richly adorn or gallantly bedeck the trimmed garland of his budding style." He admires the exquisite forms of speech of foreign poets, especially honoring Petrarch's work as "the grace of art, a precious tablet of rare conceits." "A pithy filed sentence," he thinks, "is to be embraced whosoever is the author," and "right artificiality," at which he himself "once aimed to the uttermost" of his "slender capacity," is not mad-brained or ridiculous, but delicate, gracious, exquisite.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first critics to rise in protest against the growing worship of conceits and "hyperbolical amplifications" of poetic style is Sir Philip Sidney, the model of courtly elegance whose refined taste most men of letters fain would gratify. Deprecating the conception of poetry that

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Spenser (1579-80), Smith, i, 114-115. It is of interest to note a different attitude at the end of the century in such writers as the satirists Marston and Hall. Both feel called upon to defend clearness — doubtless because of the increasing popular audience and change of taste — against the conventional obscurity of style deemed proper in satire. "Know, I hate to affect too much obscurity and harshness, because they profit no sense," writes Marston. And complaining of those who term "all satires bastard which are not palpably dark," he declares: "I cannot, nay, I will not delude your sight with mists; yet I dare defend my plainness against the verjuiceface of the crabbed'st satirist that ever stuttered" (Pref. *Scourge of Villainy*). Hall answers the cavil that may be made against his apparent "stooping to the low reach of the vulgar" with the excuse that he has been forced somewhat to forego elegant obscurity because readers are becoming too dainty to break hard shells. "Let me be plain, with a hope of profit", he says, "rather than purposely obscure, only for a bare name's sake" (Postscript to *Satires*). Daniel in his *Musophilus* wisely counsels clearness, declaring, without the reluctance of Hall, that it is the necessary alternative if a poet would be heard:

For not discreetly to compose our parts,  
Unto the frame of men (which we must be)  
Is to put off ourselves and make our arts  
Rebels to nature and society,  
Whereby we come to bury our deserts,  
In the obscure grave of singularity.

Chapman thinks that "obscurity in affectation of words and indigested conceits is pedantical and childish; but where it shroudeth itself in the heart of his subject, uttered with fitness of figure and expressive epithets, with that darkness I will still labor to be shrouded" (Schelling, *Literature during the Lifetime of Shakespeare*, p. 323).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, ii, 234, 235, 260.

fixes attention merely on the "outside of it," he rebukes alike the extravagances of Euphuists and Petrarchists. Style in his view, instead of being extraneous and superimposed, should emanate as the natural expression of a writer's thoughts and feelings inspired by his subject. The reason why "divers smally learned courtiers" possess "a more sound style" than "some professors of learning," he thinks, is "that the courtier, following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature, therein (though he know it not) doth according to art: where the other, using art to show art, and not to hide art . . . flyeth from nature, and indeed abuseth art."<sup>15</sup> Further meditating upon the real source of beauty and power in poetic art, and disgusted with the practice of contemporary poets, Sidney in entering upon the composition of his own sonnet sequence concludes:

You that do search for every purling spring  
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows,  
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows  
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring;  
Ye that do dictionary's method bring  
Into your rimes running in rattling rows;  
You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes  
With new-born sighs and denizen'd wit do sing;

<sup>15</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 203. Master Cheke once impressed Ascham by observing that the reason why Sallust is not "purest in propriety of words, nor choicest in aptness of phrases, nor the best in framing of sentences" is that in his writing "is more art than nature, and more labor than art: and in his labor also too much toil, as it were, with an uncontented care to write better than he could, a fault common to very many men" (*Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 40). It is of interest to find that John Lyly attributes this fault, which he exploited, to the taste of his day. "It is a world to see", he says, "how English men desire to hear finer speech than the language will allow, to eat finer bread than is made of wheat, to wear finer cloth than is wrought of wool" (Epist. Ded., *Euphuies, the Anatomy of Wit*). Similar tendencies are reprobated by Jonson. "Now nothing is good", he complains, "that is natural; right and natural language seems to have least of the wit in it; that which is writhed and tortured is counted the more exquisite . . . Nothing is fashionable till it be deformed; and this is to write like a gentleman. All must be affected and preposterous" (*Discoveries*, p. 21). Both gentlemen and scholars are offenders in these far-fetched affectations of expression as is comically shown in the caricatures in *Love's Labor's Lost*, where one of the points of Shakespeare's humor is to make the pedant Holofernes censure in his own high-flown verbosity the fantastical bombast of Don Armado. Daniel in his *Panegyric Congratulatory*, addressed to James I on his accession, deplores general tendencies toward "wanton and superfluous bravery" and expresses hope of a return "from out these foreign sins" to "our ancient native modesty".

You take wrong ways; those far-fet helps be such  
As do bewray a want of inward touch.<sup>16</sup>

The only way to success in an art that depends first of all upon this "inward touch," he finds from his own experience, is to "look in thy heart and write." The figures and graces of style will have naturalness and force only when the imagination is animated by a stir of emotion.

Although Sidney in showing the "spots of the common infection among the most part of writers" graciously includes himself as "sick among the rest," he consciously and persistently resists the prevalent malady in his own work as a poet.

Let dainty wits cry on the Sisters nine,  
That, bravely masked, their fancies may be told;  
Or, Pindar's apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,  
Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of gold;  
Or else let them in statelier glory shine,  
Ennobling new found tropes with problems old;  
Or with strange similes enrich each line,  
Of herbs or beasts which Ind or Afric hold.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sonnet XV. Cp. Marston (*Works*, Bullen, iii, 278):

His chamber hang'd about with elegies,  
With sad complaints of his love's miseries;  
His windows strewed with sonnets, and the glass  
Drawn full of love-knots. I approached the ass,  
And straight he weeps, and sighs some sonnet out  
To his fair love! And then he goes about  
For to perfume her rare perfection  
With some sweet-smelling pink epitheton.

Lodge makes Rosalind smile "at the sonnetoes, canzones, madrigals, rounds and roundelays that these pensive patients pour out, when their eyes are more full of wantonness than their hearts of passions . . . holding *amo* in their tongues, when their thoughts come at haphazard, write that they be wrapped in an endless labyrinth of sorrow, when . . . they only have their humors in their inkpot".

<sup>17</sup> Sonnet III. Drayton, who is not pleased with Lyly's ridiculous tricks, says (Chalmers' *English Poets*, iv, 399) that Sidney

did first reduce  
Our tongue from Lyly's writing then in use,—  
Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,  
Playing with words and idle similes.

But from such cold application of "fiery speeches" he himself proposes to abstain.<sup>18</sup> Writers who follow such methods show that they have "read lovers' writings" rather "than that in truth they feel those passions, which easily . . . may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness, or *Energia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer." The pity is that by these superficial and false ideals and practices "we miss the right use of the material point of poesy."<sup>19</sup>

Sidney, however, notwithstanding his reprehension of artificial ornamentation, like the other critics strongly desires "to beautify our mother tongue" and to free English poetry from the stigma of crudeness and barbarousness. Although his heart is moved by the ballad of

<sup>18</sup> Cp. Shakespeare, who in the last act of *Love's Labor's Lost* (V, ii, 406) causes Biron to reform:

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,  
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,  
Figures pedantical; these summer-flies  
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.  
I do forswear them, and I here protest . . .  
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express'd  
In russet yeas and honest kersey noes.

His Troilus (III, ii, 181) also speaks slightly of the poverty of stylistic affectation:

When their rimes  
Full of protest, of oath and big compare,  
Want similes, truth tir'd with iteration.

Cassio says of Desdemona (II, i, 63) that she is

One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens.

Shakespeare in Sonnet 76 puts the question:

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,  
So far from variation or quick change?  
Why with the time do I not glance aside  
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?

And in Sonnet 82 he protests against the "gross painting" of rival poets,

when they have devis'd  
What strained touches rhetoric can lend.

In Sonnet 130 he disdains the false similes of convention:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun . . .  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belid with false compare.

<sup>19</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 201.

*Chevy Chase*, he does not reach the viewpoint of Daniel of accepting without qualification the natural music of the children of nature. He must confess to barbarism<sup>20</sup> and wish this old ballad of an "uncivil age" trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar; and something like gorgeous eloquence he attempts in his own *Arcadia*. Evidently he with his age was experiencing that conflict in the adjustment of ideals which occurs when people undergo a rapid transition from one stage of culture to another. He was, however, a true leader and guide, promoting advancement and checking attendant extremes and extravagances. He was in harmony with the Euphuists and Petrarchists in their desire to elevate the language and refine poetic style, but he saw mischief and disaster in their pernicious methods of attempting to realize this desire. Their dragging in of superfluous figures by way of external ornamentation, constructing ornament instead of ornamenting construction, serves but to oversway "the memory from the purpose." By their "courtesan-like painted affectations," their winter-starved figures and flowers,<sup>21</sup> they but make poetry ridiculous. Desiring the highest possible excellence, Sidney insists that any real and abiding distinction of style must be based upon something more natural and vital than mere verbal jugglery and superficial decoration.

King James VI, "a royal rhetorician," in his "sonnet deciphering the perfect poet" expresses his own aspiration to "obtain the laurel tree," one of the requirements being to compose

With skillfulness and figures which proceed  
From Rhetoric, with everlasting fame.

In his treatise on verse he devotes a short chapter<sup>22</sup> to ornamentation, directing poets to mark "three special ornaments . . . . comparisons, epithets, and proverbs." He adds to this a little chapter on the "figure of repetition," which "sometimes used decorates the verse very much" and it may "be comely to repeat such a word eight or nine times in a verse." To the ornament that he terms comparison he applies the principle of decorum, cautioning the poet to take heed that his comparisons "be so proper for the subject that neither they be over base, if your subject be high . . . . neither your comparison be

<sup>20</sup> Addison "must . . . . beg leave to dissent from so great an authority as that of Sir Philip Sidney, in the judgment which he has passed as to the rude style and evil apparel of this antiquated song".

<sup>21</sup> Smith, i, 202, 203.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, i, 211. *Ib.*, 219.

high when your subject is base. . . . But let such a mutual correspondence and similitude be betwixt them as it may appear to be a meet comparison for such a subject, and so shall they each one decorate the other." Avoid devices made threadbare by other poets. One device for the difficult problem of praising your Love is to "say that your wits are so small, and your utterance so barren, that you cannot describe any part of her worthily." Seek variety in your figurative terms; if you call the sun Titan one time, "call him Phoebus or Apollo the other time."

Webbe has the prevalent aspiration toward refinement of style, and though acknowledging with regret that English speech "has not fully avoided the reproach of barbarousness in poetry," he has faith, in view of the work of contemporary writers, that it may gradually "be brought to the very majesty of a right heroical verse."<sup>23</sup> To this end he exhorts men of poetic talent to aid in so adorning and beautifying the art as utterly to discredit the rabble of bald rimers. He is, however, much attracted by artifices and conceits and his ideas in behalf of poetic ornament and refinement are in general superficial, differing widely from those of Sidney. He is an ardent admirer of Master John Lyly and the "witty discourses of his *Euphues*," whose "gallant tropes" highly gratify his sense of elegance. In like manner he would adorn poetry with "brave devices," "dainty morsels," and "singular inventions";<sup>24</sup> and he is sure that it would be worthy his travail if he could report the "sundry kinds of rare devices and pretty inventions which come from the fine poetical vein of many in strange and unaccustomed manner." Of these devices he mentions the "turning of verses, the infolding of words, the fine repetitions, the clerkly conveying of contraries, and many such like." He calls upon his readers, for example, to admire "the rueful song of Colin sung by Cuddie in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, where you shall see a singular rare device of a ditty framed upon . . . six words . . . which are most prettily turned." Among other pleasing devices, he illustrates one in which the last words of several verses make "a pretty sense" summing up that of the verses themselves. Of these "echoes" he knows "very dainty pieces of work" among some of the finest poets in London, "who for the rareness of them . . . will not let them come abroad." There are "infinite sorts" of such

<sup>23</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 228, 256. Webbe delights in Chaucer, who, considering his time, is the "perfect shape of a right poet", though "his style may seem blunt and coarse to many fine English ears at these days" (Smith, i, 241).

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, 244, 245, 256.

"fine conveyances . . . much frequented by versifiers," and Webbe recommends them to the "consideration of every pleasant headed poet," for "many others may be devised of like sort."<sup>25</sup> However, he encourages only those of learning and talent to aid in the adornment of poetry, for others attempting to garnish the art with their devices will rather corrupt it "with fantastical errors."

In Puttenham, who considers poetry "a manner of utterance and language of extraordinary phrase," more than in any of the other critics is reflected the increasing interest in complexity of style that was displacing the older emphasis on allegory; and more than any other critic he takes it upon himself to set forth the "commendable fashions of language and style." In the poet's "manner of language and style," he affirms, lies his power "to utter with pleasure and delight";<sup>26</sup> and "requisite to the perfection" of his art is the "manner of exornation," which rests in so fashioning his language and style that it may delight mind and ear "with a certain novelty and strange manner of conveyance" by which it is disguised "no little from the ordinary and accustomed" and made more decent and agreeable "to any civil ear and understanding." English poetry then, in order to become free from the reproach of barbarism and take its proper place in the social and intellectual life of the nation, must be clad in its "kindly clothes and colors" and made attractive to the highest sense of beauty and elegance. Just as "great madams of honor" think themselves more pleasing "in their richest attire" than in "plain and simple apparel" and wanting their "courtly habiliments" would be "out of countenance," even so "our vulgar poesy," naked and bare, unless meetly appareled, "artificially handled," and changed "from the common course of ordinary speech and capacity of the vulgar judgment," cannot "show itself either gallant or gorgeous" or commendably beautiful.<sup>27</sup>

Puttenham's conception of the outward garb or style of poetry, however, is much less superficial than that of Webbe. In an elaborate definition he declares that "style is a constant and continued phrase or term . . . extending to the whole tale or process of the poem." It "is, of words, speeches, and sentences together, a certain contrived form and quality, many times natural to the writer, many times his peculiar by election and art." "And because this continued course and

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.*, 276, 278.

<sup>26</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 9, 181, 191

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*, 142-143.

manner . . . . . showeth the matter and disposition of the writer's mind," style has been called "the image of man, *mentis character*," for a writer's "inward conceits be the metal of his mind, and his manner of utterance the very warp and woof of his conceits." Yet this is not altogether the case, for every man's style is or ought to be conformable also to his matter and subject.<sup>28</sup>

Obsessed by the doctrine of decorum,<sup>29</sup> Puttenham attempts to reconcile individuality of style and conformity to subject-matter by the idea that writers "choose their subjects according to the metal of their minds," a high-minded man choosing "lofty matter," a modest mind "moderate matters," and a base one "matter base and low." At any rate, in order "to have the style decent and comely," it behooves the poet "to follow the nature of his subject," adapting his style thereto; "having regard to the decency, which is the chief praise of any writer," Matters high and stately concerning divine things or the deeds and fortunes of princes require a style elevated "by choice of words, phrases, sentences, and figures, high, lofty, eloquent, and magnific in proportion." Matters concerning "lawyers, gentlemen . . . . . and honest citizens" should be given a style "of smoothness and pleasant moderation." The doings of common artificers, servingmen, laborers, and shepherds should have a low, "simple manner of utterance, creeping rather than climbing," as pastoral poesy with its "homely persons" and "rude speeches"; for with these men "loves, marriages, quarrels, contracts, and other behaviors" are not "like high nor do require to be set forth with the like style, but every one in his degree and decency."<sup>30</sup> Nor, now considering the status of readers, should the rude and barbarous be given such music as the learned and delicate. Thus, with reference to writer, subject, and reader Puttenham would have style ruled by

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, 153-154. "The phrase is to the matter", says Isabella, *Measure for Measure*, V, i, 90.

<sup>29</sup> He had written a book *De Decoro* in which might be seen "both parts", decorum of speech and of behavior, "handled more exactly" (Smith, ii, 181). "The observance of decorum necessitated the maintenance of the social distinctions which formed the basis of renaissance life and renaissance literature" (Spingarn, *Lit. Crit.*, 87). Ascham lays stress upon it as a principle of broad application, declaring that it is to be scrupulously observed "in every matter to be spoken or written", and that "as it is the hardest point in all learning, so it is the fairest and only mark that scholars in all their study must always shoot at, if they purpose another day to be either found in religion or wise and discreet in any vocation of the commonwealth" (*Schoolmaster*, Arber, p. 99).

<sup>30</sup> Smith, ii, 155, 157, 158.

decorum. And this decorum or aristocracy of style, as the aristocracy of men, he grounds in nature herself. This "seemliness" or "decency," "the good grace of everything in his kind," "this lovely conformity . . . hath nature herself first most carefully observed in all her own works," and grafted it "in the appetites of every creature." It is therefore "the line and level for all good makers to do their business by."<sup>31</sup> Poets who fail to observe these distinctions of style "do utterly disgrace their poesy and show themselves nothing skillful in their art."<sup>32</sup>

An essential element for the refinement of poetic style is ornament, and ornament—comprehensively considered, outwardly yielding smoothness and melody, "luster and light," and "inwardly," by its power to evoke thought and feeling, "working a stir to the mind"—Puttenham seems almost to regard as comprising style itself. It is the "beautiful habit of language or style, and figurative speeches the instrument wherewith we burnish our language . . . whence finally resulteth a long and continued phrase or manner of writing or speech, which we call by the name of style." The principal means of ornament, which must delight and allure the mind as well as ear, are "figures and figurative speeches," the flowers and colors of the poet's art.<sup>33</sup> Although a style may be "pure and cleanly" and sufficiently pleasing "for the ordinary use of speech," yet it is not "so well appointed for all purposes of the excellent poet as when it is gallantly arrayed in all his colors which figure can set upon it."<sup>34</sup> Just as men are charmed by the courtly manners and habiliments of social life, so must the poet appeal to their sense of grace and elegance by the beauty and gallantness of his language and style. Significantly enough figurative speech is to Puttenham, as to Elizabethans in general, a charming "novelty of language." But though he finds that figures are pleasingly "estranged from the ordinary

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, 173, 174.

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, 155. Cp. Chapman (*Plays*, ed. R. H. Shepherd, p. 185):

Worthiest poets  
Shun common and plebeian forms of speech,  
Every illiberal and affected phrase  
To clothe their matter and together tie  
Matter and form, with art and decency.

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*, 143, 148. In addition to his copious treatment of figures in the *Art of English Poesy*, Puttenham wrote a work entitled *Philocalia* in which he dealt with the application of the figure "exargasia" and "all others mentioned in this book" (Smith, ii, 170).

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, 165.

habit and manner of our daily talk and writing," he declares—getting back to nature as in his exposition of decorum—that all "are but observations of strange speeches," such as men use naturally without art, nature herself suggesting figures in this or that form, but art aiding the judgment in their use and application.<sup>35</sup>

However beautiful figures may be in themselves, Puttenham deems that unless there is due sense of decorum in their application they may "fall into a deformity." The poet therefore must have "special regard to all circumstances of the person, place, time, cause, and purpose he hath in hand," and also realize that "some phrases and figures be only peculiar to the high style, some to the base or mean, some common to all three."<sup>36</sup> Although it is "a great fault to use figurative speeches foolishly and indiscreetly," the poet cannot avoid censure by not using figures at all, for it is "no less an imperfection" to make his work like "ordinary talk, than which nothing can be more unsavory and far from all civility." Because of the necessary witty distinctions and nice discriminations, "the chief praise and cunning of our poet is in the discreet using of his figures."<sup>37</sup>

Although Puttenham is more complacent than Sidney toward the artificial devices of style, including in his extended treatment even "ocular examples" of "geometrical figures,"<sup>38</sup> he does not regard the function of ornament and figure as merely that of external decoration. The ornaments of style not only delight by their "goodly outward show," they also work inwardly,<sup>39</sup> having power to stir the mind and heart and inveigle man's judgment and prompt his action. This latter quality the Greeks called *Energia*, "because it wrought with a strong and virtuous operation"<sup>40</sup>—it is the same *Energia* or forcibleness that Sidney recom-

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, 182.

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*, 159, 161. Cp. Ben Jonson on decorum in the use of figures, *Discoveries*, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*, 143, 144. Puttenham considers Chaucer's "similitudes . . . such as cannot be amended" (Smith, ii, 64).

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*, 95. Watson, a borrower of Italian conceits and affectations, and one of the most popular poets of his time, describes his seventy-first sonnet as "a Pasquine Pillar erected in despite of love". Addison (*Spectator*, No. 58) happily ridicules "this fashion of false wit . . . revived by several poets of the last age", mentioning in particular George Herbert.

<sup>39</sup> "Rhetoric and music", thought Hawes, "produce not only order in words and harmony in sounds, but also order in man's life and harmony in his soul" (*Cambridge History*, ii, 262).

<sup>40</sup> Smith, ii, 148.

mends to displace the affected conceits of "lovers' writings." Thus Puttenham, insisting upon the high importance of propriety or decorum in all the processes of poetry and recognizing an intimate relationship between subject-matter and style, looks upon the latter not only as a source of pleasure but also as possessing an intellectual and emotional force that makes it an important and essential element in the sum total of poetic effect.

Another writer who seeks to make available for the enhancement of English poetry all possible graces and adornments of style is Sidney's friend Abraham Fraunce. With the idea that "bravery of speech consisteth in tropes or turnings, and in figures or fashionings," he gives in his *Arcadian Rhetoric* (1588) copious illustrations from Homer, Virgil, and Sir Philip Sidney and from Italian, French, and Spanish writers, "confusedly" inserting "a number of conceited verses"—among them verses from the *Shepherd's Calendar* and the *Faery Queen*, from the latter before it was published—to show how "all their grace and delicacy proceedeth from the figures" that he has expounded.<sup>41</sup>

The lively interest of the critics of this period in matters of style is further manifested by many scattering remarks of praise and censure. Wyatt and Surrey as the "first refiners of the English tongue," the "first reformers and polishers,"<sup>42</sup> are gratefully honored by all; Sidney and Spenser are highly extolled, and the efforts of less deserving writers are duly acknowledged. Sir John Harington praises Turbervile because "when times were yet but rude thy pen endeavored to polish barbarism with purer style,"<sup>43</sup> Turbervile, himself a deliberate polisher, having enthusiastically commended Surrey for banishing our "ruder speech."<sup>44</sup> Stanyhurst, ridiculed by Nash for the "hissed barbarism" of his "hexameter fury," zealously applied himself in the hope of beautifying poetry and advancing the "riches of our speech."<sup>45</sup> Harvey and Nash, in the common cause of improvement and refinement of style, berate each other for defects. Harvey hurls execrations at Nash's poetry, classing it with the doggerel of Tarlton and Elderton, but affectionately thanks better poets for their studious endeavors toward enriching and embellishing

<sup>41</sup> Smith, i, 303 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, ii, 131, 219.

<sup>43</sup> D. Hannay's *Later Renaissance*, 190.

<sup>44</sup> Chalmer's *English Poets*, ii, 558.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, i, 138.

their native tongue. Nash repays the compliment by his ridicule of the "crude humors" of Harvey's "pagan hexameters."<sup>46</sup>

Toward the end of the century expressions of aspiration for refinement of poetic style give place somewhat to expressions of pride in achievement. Nash in 1592 makes the significant remark that the poets have so cleansed the language from barbarism that "the vulgar sort" in London "aspire to a richer purity of speech" than is used by the commonalty of any other "nation under heaven."<sup>47</sup> Harvey gratefully thanks famous English poets, sons of the Muses, for their work in refining the language, "never so furnished or embellished as of late."<sup>48</sup> Richard Carew, writing in the middle of the last decade of the century, finds the English tongue especially "fruitful and forcible" in metaphor, none being capable of delivering "a matter with more variety than ours, both plainly and by proverbs and metaphors";<sup>49</sup> and Dr. Giles Fletcher, noting with pride the increasing power of the English language, considers "our nation . . . so exquisite . . . that neither Italy, Spain, nor France can go beyond us for exact invention," there being no longer occasion for the reprehensible borrowing of conceits.<sup>50</sup> Meres (1598) declares that it is the work of "our English poets which makes our language so gorgeous and delectable among us"; and he honors a list, comprising Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Warner, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Chapman, by whom "the English tongue is mightily enriched and gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments." Drake, he says, termed Drayton "golden-mouthed" for the purity and preciousness of his style and phrase; and "I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrases if they would speak English"—"mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare."<sup>51</sup>

In the early part of the period, it appears, rhetoricians, classical humanists, and devotees to renaissance culture all endeavored to encourage and carry forward the highly applauded and much desired refining and polishing of English poetry begun by Wyatt and Surrey. The earlier satisfaction in allegory largely gave way to the quest of adornment and elegance. Aspirations, paralleling those of social life, to

<sup>46</sup> Smith, ii, 234, 237.

<sup>47</sup> *Works*, McKerrow, i, 193.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, ii, 234.

<sup>49</sup> *Excellency of the English Tongue*, Smith, ii, 292.

<sup>50</sup> To the Reader, *Licia* (1593).

<sup>51</sup> *Palladis Tamia*, Smith, ii, 310, 315, 316, 318.

learn best usage and to practice and excel in it were strongly felt by those interested in poetic art, critics and poets being determined that English poetry should no longer suffer reproach from its plainness and baldness of style. At first, however, their efforts were somewhat discouraged by the inability of readers to comprehend and appreciate the figurative and decorative graces set before them; but experience at banquets of dainty conceits and gallant inventions soon whetted literary taste, and the growing passion for poetical Euphuisms and Petrarchisms gave rise to such extravagances and affectations that men of refined culture like Sidney and Spenser felt the necessity of vigorous protest in order to save poetry from ridiculous degradation. These men seem to have felt intuitively that in the untoward aspiration for superficial elegance there lurked seeds of disaster—to be reaped later by the “metaphysical” school—whose growth must be checked in order that the better spirit of Elizabethan poetry might come to fruition. True refinement of art, they show, cannot be brought about by apish imitation or mere extraneous decoration. They believe that real beauty of expression, which is a deep force in life, can come only from men of true poetic endowment and refined taste, capable of lofty thought and feeling and inspired by worthy subjects.

It could not be expected, however, that the high ideals of poetic style held by Sidney and Spenser would be embraced by the multitude of inferior poets or even by the less idealistic critics. A more generally effective remedy against the crudities of rimesters and the extravagances of Euphuists and Petrarchists, because more easily comprehensible to the offenders and more easily applicable, was the doctrine of decorum so elaborately and insistently expounded by the courtier critic Puttenham and so acceptable to the critics in general. But decorum of style as conceived by Puttenham and others does not necessarily clash with the idealism of Sidney and Spenser. For with decorum in mind as the way of nature, Puttenham regards style on the one hand as the expression of the poet's character, his thoughts and feelings, and on the other as the outgrowth or artistic and emotional expression of the subject-matter when adequately conceived by the poet. This indeed is not far from Sidney's own view—namely, that poetry should represent the highest beauty of which the soul of man is capable and that it should receive a corresponding height and beauty of expression—and makes consistent the enthusiastic praise accorded the work of Sidney and Spenser by the advocates of decorum. Theories of style in this period were in general

flexible and readily subordinated to the esthetic and idealistic spirit that animated them. All gave way to the simple creed that crudeness and ugliness are to be avoided and condemned and refinement and beauty to be sought and honored.

The generally tolerant attitude of critics toward decorative and figurative features of poetic style gaudy and unnatural to the taste of a different age, is not so hard to understand when one remembers that the esthetic emotions of the age of Elizabeth were pitched in another key. The world was younger, life was gayer and brighter. Taste was different. Ornaments of life and literature that now seem withered and "winter-starved" then seemed fresh and beautiful, not only delighting the senses but stirring the mind and heart, quickening the imagination, and thus accomplishing the purposes of poetry. Moreover, the movement toward ornamentation and refinement of poetic style, involving at once the motives of gratifying the spirit of national emulation and class distinction and of satisfying a newly stimulated sense of grace and beauty, was naturally bound to result in excesses as well as in excellence. Out of this movement, however, tempered by the judgment and cultured taste of the noblest spirits of the age, issued, despite bubbles and froth, a plenteous stream of the wine of pure poetry,—poetry that for skillful and picturesque metaphor and general freshness and charm of verbal expression has gained the enthusiastic praise of the best critics down to the present day; and that caused the later Elizabethan critics proudly to exult in the possession of a native poetic style which for richness, variety, and general elegance might challenge comparison with that of the best ancient or modern tongues.

## II. DICTION

Owing to the rapid intellectual development of the time and the plastic state of the language, one of the great problems of Elizabethan men of letters was that of evolving a diction adequate to the corresponding growth of literature. The critics of poetry, therefore, give earnest attention to all matters of diction, no question of words, long or short, old or new, high or low, being deemed too trivial for consideration; for in the questions of language, they believe, are involved in large measure the welfare and advancement of poetic art. The problem of enriching and refining the diction of poetry thus gives rise to much discussion as to the desirability of borrowing from foreign languages, the restoration of older native words, compounding of words and new coinages, decorum, and in general all questions concerned with the development of a diction such

as would give English poetry the beauty and distinction of highest possible artistic merit.

Aspirations for the elevation of poetic diction were strong in both England and Scotland as early as the time of Hawes and Dunbar. Hawes repeatedly apologizes for his rude diction and does his best to create an "aromatic fume" of fine rhetoric, and Dunbar likewise endeavors to "illumine" the vernacular with pretentious and clerkly terms of Latinity. The generally recognized starting point of polish and refinement of poetic diction, however, is in the "stateliness of style removed from the rude skill of common ears"<sup>1</sup> to be found in the work of the courtly makers Wyatt and Surrey, who by their intimate contact with the literature of Italy had achieved a standard of elegance before alien to English poetry.

Scholars of the early part of the period like Wilson, Cheke, and Ascham share in the desire to improve diction, although they see mischief in the quest of elegance as manifested in excessive borrowings from foreign languages and establish a tradition of conservatism toward "inkhorn terms." Wilson reprehends "counterfeiting the King's English" by the affectation of "oversea language" on the part of returning travelers, especially from Italy, some of whom "seek so far for outlandish English that they forget altogether their mothers' language."<sup>2</sup> In general he disapproves of the use of words too strange or too old and deplores the fact that "men count it a point of wit to pass over such words as are at hand" for "such as are far-fetcht and translated."<sup>3</sup> A similarly conservative attitude is taken by Sir John Cheke, who prefers "the old denized words" and expresses the "opinion that our own tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixt and unmangled with borrowing of other tongues." Borrowing, which may lead to bankruptcy, should be only a last resort and then with "bashfulness."<sup>4</sup> Ascham, who is in agreement with Wilson and Cheke as regards inkhorn terms and importations from foreign languages, in general lays much stress upon "propriety of words and pureness of phrases," admiring the "pure fine talk of Rome . . . . used by the flower of the worthiest nobility," and considering "proper and apt words" as requisite "for good matters" as choice food for healthy bodies. Men

<sup>1</sup> Tottel, Pref. *Miscellany*.

<sup>2</sup> Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 360.

<sup>3</sup> Carpenter's *Metaphor and Simile in Elizabethan Drama*, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Thomas Hoby (1557) on his translation of *The Courtier* (Smith, i, 357).

know not what harm they do learning who "care not for words but for matter, and so make a divorce betwixt the tongue and the heart."<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth, Ascham is pleased to note, "is very quick in pointing out a far-fetched word or an affected phrase,"<sup>7</sup> and he would have it understood that she reprobates such.

Gascoigne cares for both words and matter, but he would have the poet stand most upon the excellency of his invention, "for it is not enough to roll in pleasant words, nor yet to thunder in rym, ram, ruff," nor "to abound in apt vocables or epithets, unless the invention have in it also *aliquid salis*." Invention "being found, pleasant words will follow well enough and fast enough."<sup>7</sup> He advises, however, the use of as few polysyllables as may be; for since "the most ancient English words are of one syllable . . . the more monosyllables that you use the truer Englishman you shall seem, and the less you shall smell of the inkhorn." Moreover, monosyllables are less cloying and better meet the requirements of accent in English verse.<sup>8</sup> The poet should as much as possible "eschew strange words, or *obsoleta and inusita*," though the theme may sometimes give "just occasion" and such words may be used, if with discretion, to "draw attentive reading."<sup>9</sup> Gascoigne, however, must recognize that "shrewd fellow" "poetical license" that "covereth many faults in a verse," making words "longer, shorter, of more syllables, of fewer, newer, older, truer, falser," altering "all things at pleas-

<sup>6</sup> *Schoolmaster*, Smith, i, 6, 28. Bacon a generation later feels called upon to reprove those who "hunt more after words than matter" (Saintsbury's *Hist. Crit.*, ii, 193); and Elyot, before Ascham, had cautioned that "they be much abused that suppose eloquence to be only in words or colors of rhetoric" (*Governor*, Bk. I, chap. xiii).

<sup>7</sup> Courthope's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 129.

<sup>8</sup> *Notes of Instruction*, Smith, i, 47, 48.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, 51. In his *Steel Glass* (Smith, i, 160) he versifies in behalf of monosyllables:

That Grammar grudge not at our English tongue  
Because it stands by *monosyllaba*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, 52. A marginal note in an unknown hand objects: "*Non placet*. A greater grace and majesty in longer words, so they be current English. Monosyllables are good to make up a gobbling and huddling verse" (Smith, i, 360). Shakespeare evidently realizes the value of both long and short words. He causes Biron to say (*Love's Labor's Lost*, V, ii, 763):

Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief.

ure."<sup>10</sup> In putting forth his own works he declares that he has always been of the opinion "that it is not impossible either in poems or in prose to write both compendiously and perfectly in our English tongue"; and therefore, though he does not claim "the name of English poet," it affords him satisfaction that he has "more faulted in keeping the old English words (*quamuis iam obsoleta*) than in borrowing of other languages such epithets and adjectives as smell of the inkhorn." Although he has been "sometimes constrained for the cadence of rimes, or *per licentiam poeticam*, to use an inkhorn term or a strange word," yet he hopes that it will be apparent that he has had "rather regard to make our native language commendable in itself, than gay with the feathers of strange birds."<sup>11</sup>

E. K., who as herald of the new poet of the *Shepherd's Calendar* feels called upon to explain its departures in language,<sup>12</sup> is the first English critic who pronouncedly recognizes and defends a "poetic diction." The words of the *Calendar*, he grants, are "something hard, and of most men unused, yet both English, and also used of most excellent authors and most famous poets." He suggests several reasons for such unusual diction. Strange and ancient words may have been used as "fittest for such rustical rudeness of shepherds" or "because such old and obsolete words are most used of country folk." At any rate they are not amiss and "bring great grace and . . . authority to the verse"; and E. K. agrees with "the best learned" that "ancient and solemn words are a great ornament," suggesting antiquity and giving the effect of "gravity and importance"—as Tully says, oftentimes an ancient word makes the style seem grave and reverend.<sup>13</sup> Old words, however, must

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 53. "For example, *ydone* for *done*, *adowne* for *downe*, *orecome* for *overcome*, *tane* for *taken*, *power* for *powre*, *heaven* for *heavn*, *thieves* for good parts or good qualities, and a number of other . . . needless to rehearse", since the reader may for himself "espy such advantages". Harvey comments (Smith, i, 361), "All these in Spenser and many like: but with discretion: and tolerably, though sometime not greatly commendably" — and also states that "Spenser hath revived *uncouth*, *whilom*, *of yore*, *forthy*". See Gloss to *Shepherd's Calendar* for "poetical additions" noted as such by E. K.

<sup>11</sup> Pref. *Posies*, *Complete Poems*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> See his Epistle Dedicatory.

<sup>13</sup> "Master Spenser", remarks Francis Beaumont (Moulton, *Library Crit.*, i, 393), "following the counsel of Tully in *De Oratore* for reviving of ancient words, hath adorned his own style with that beauty and gravity which Tully speaks of". Ben Jonson says (*Discoveries*, p. 61): "Words borrowed of antiquity do lend a kind of majesty to style, and are not without their delight sometimes; for they have the authority of

not be stuffed in everywhere, "nor the common dialect and manner of speaking so corrupted thereby that, as in old buildings, it seem disorderly and ruinous." Rather, as a delightful "natural rudeness" may be inserted in pictures in order that "more excellency may accrue to the principal" or as a discord in music makes "a comely concordance," "even so do those rough and harsh terms enlumine, and make more clearly to appear, the brightness of brave and glorious words." Furthermore, there is "one special praise of many" due this poet in that "he hath labored to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use and almost clean disherited." This disinheritance, E. K. thinks, "is the only cause that our mother tongue, which truly of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time been counted most bare and barren of both"; and deploring the "hodgepodge" made of English by unnecessary borrowings from other languages he would have Spenser's restorations regarded as a national benefit.

Spenser himself, whose views are no doubt reflected by E. K., has little to say on the subject of poetic diction.<sup>14</sup> In his poems it was apparently his aim to frame a new style of diction adapted to the uncommon nature of his subject-matter. Doubtless while pursuing this motive of decorum and artistic effectiveness he also sought by his revival of old English words, as E. K. suggests, to check the practice of extravagant borrowings from foreign languages and to encourage the use of the native vocabulary in the development of a native poetic diction. It also seems clear that Spenser desired by a special diction not only to differentiate his work from ordinary speech but also to give it such distinction as would set it apart and place it indubitably above that of the dramatists and the despised rimesters. Although his contemporaries and followers

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years, and out of their intermission do win themselves a kind of gracelike newness. But the eldest of the present, and newest of the past language is the best".

<sup>14</sup> In his *Tears of the Muses* he reprobates the misconception of poetry on the part of the "base vulgar":

Heaps of huge words uphoarded hideously,  
With horrid sound though having little sense,  
They think to be chief praise of poetry.

He remarks in a letter to Harvey (Smith, i, 99), as regards the adaptation of English diction to Latin prosody, that "rough words must be subdued with use". Cp. Ben Jonson, who says of new-coined words, "things at first hard and rough are by use made tender and gentle" (*Discoveries*, p. 61).

in general show scant regard for the archaic feature of his style—partly no doubt because it smacked too much of dreaded barbarism—it proved very attractive to eighteenth century poets who desired to leave the beaten track, and has been the chief source of modern archaizing in English poetry. Indeed, the peculiarly poetic character of Spenser's style—so largely a matter of words—recognized down through the different ages, warrants the designation, "founder of . . . modern English poetic diction."<sup>15</sup>

When Sir Philip Sidney, after deprecating the superficial and affected spirit of love poetry of his time, turns to the "outside of it, which is words or . . . diction,"<sup>16</sup> he declares that "it is even well worse." Eloquence is disguised in "painted affectation" with such "far-fet words, they may seem monsters, but must seem strangers to any poor English man." Then there are ridiculous attempts at decoration with withered "figures and flowers" and the absurd "coursing of a letter" as if writers "were bound to follow the method of a dictionary"; and wishing that these faults "were only peculiar to versifiers," Sidney soon finds himself deserving "to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory," though the two have close "affinity in this wordish consideration." Writers are "awry" and not the language, which is "indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it." Though it is a mingled language, "so much the better, taking the best of both the other." It needs not grammar and is happily void of the cumbersome differences of inflected languages. It is "particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together," in this being "near the Greek, far beyond the Latin." These compositions, which Sidney admires as "one of the greatest beauties can be in a language," he employs copiously in his own writing, especially in his *Arcadia*.<sup>17</sup> In general, for "uttering the con-

<sup>15</sup> Saintsbury, *Hist. Eng. Prosody*, p. 320.

<sup>16</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 201-204.

<sup>17</sup> Bishop Hall (*Satires*, Bk. VI, Satire I) also admires this "new elegance" of style, which he says Sidney imported from France:

He knows the grace of that new elegance  
Which sweet *Philisides* fetcht of late from France,  
That well beseem'd his high styl'd *Arcady*,  
Tho others mar it with much liberty;  
In epithets to join two words in one,  
Forsooth, for adjectives cannot stand alone;  
As a great poet could of Bacchus say,  
That he was *semele-femori-gena*.

ceits of the mind, which is the end of speech," Sidney concludes that English equals "any other tongue in the world."

Sidney's almost unconscious "straying from poetry to oratory" in his discussion of diction, as well as the poetical character of his style in the *Arcadia*, seems to indicate that he had in view no special diction for poetry as distinguished from that of prose, at least imaginative prose. Verse, he declares, is "no cause to poetry"; likewise, apparently he thought of diction, and naturally enough he failed to appreciate the artificial archaism of the *Shepherd's Calendar*. "That same framing of his style to an old rustic language," he declares, "I dare not allow."<sup>18</sup> It had not the authority of the ancients, and perhaps too it seemed one of "those far-fet helps" that "bewray a want of inward touch."

King James VI expresses considerable interest in matters of diction, one of the qualifications of his "perfect poet" being,

With pithie wordis, for to expres yow by it  
His full intention in his proper leid  
The puritie quhairrof weill hes he tryit.<sup>19</sup>

Evidently not agreeing with Gascoigne's unqualified recommendation of words of one syllable, he warns poets, because of the requirements of accent, against "oft composing your whole lines of monosyllables only (albeit our language have so many as we cannot well eschew it)." Whatever you put in verse, however, "put in no words either *metri causa* or yet for filling forth the number of the feet," unless they are as necessary as in "speaking the same purpose in prose." See to it that "your words appear to have come out willingly, and by nature, and not to have been thrown out constrainedly, by compulsion." Not having before him the success of Milton, James enjoins poets to "eschew to

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Spenser too is fond of these compounds, having two or three on almost every page. Lowell calls him "an epicure in language" who "loved 'seld-seen costly' words perhaps too well" (cf. J. B. Fletcher, "Areopagus and Pleiade", 442). Compounding, indeed, became a fashion and was abused, as Hall implies. Carew says (Smith, ii, 287) of "the composition of words" that "therein our language hath a peculiar grace, a like significancy, and more short than the Greeks". Middleton (Collier, *Poetical Decameron*, i, 34) esteems "the learned Greek, Blest in the lowly marriage of sweet words". For a list of compounds used by Sidney in his *Apology* see A. S. Cook's edition, p. 130. Shakespeare alludes to this vogue in Sonnet 76, rejecting "new-found methods" and "compounds strange".

<sup>18</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 196. Cp. the speech of shepherds in the *Arcadia*, written later.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, i, 211. Cf. also 215, 220.

insert" in their verses "a long rabble of men's names, or names of towns or such other names." Other words should be mingled among them, for placed together they will not "flow well."

"As for epithets," James explains, "it is to describe briefly, *en passant*, the natural of everything ye speak of, by adding the proper adjective unto it, whereof there are two fashions." One is "by making a corrupted word," composed of two simple words, "as Apollo guide-sun." The other is "by circumlocution, as Apollo, ruler of the sun." This last James esteems best, because it "makes no corrupted words, as the other does." The poet should, in general, try for freshness and variety in his use of poetical terms; for instance, he may vary with such terms as Titan, Phoebus, Apollo—as the critic himself does in his *Phoenix*.

Due attention must be given to decorum: "Take heed to frame your words . . . according to the matter: as in flyting and invectives your words to be cuttit short, and hurland over heuch." In love and tragedies "your words must be drawn long." In general choose words "according to the purpose": in "high and learned purpose," "use high, pithy, and learned words"; if the purpose be of love, "use common language, with some passionate words"; if of tragical matters, "use lamentable words, with some high"; if of "landward affairs," "use corrupted and uplandish words"; "finally, whatsomever be your subject," "use *vocabula artis*, whereby ye may the more vively represent that person whose part ye paint out."

Webbe, in translating the canons of Horace, which he appends to his treatise, places before his readers the statements that "the ornament of a work consisteth in words, and in the manner of the words"; that "in them all good judgment must be used and ready wit"; and that "the chiefest grace is in the most frequented words," for, as with coins, "the most used and tried are best esteemed."<sup>20</sup> Webbe's own remarks on diction, in which he is also indebted to Horace, have to do chiefly with decorum. He commends Phaer's translation of Virgil especially for the translator's success in observing the decorum of diction to be found in the original; for "Virgil always fitteth his matter in hand with words agreeable unto the same affection which he expreseth." For instance, "in his dreadful battles and dreary bickerments of wars, how big and boisterous his words sound,"<sup>21</sup> and like decorum may be observed throughout

<sup>20</sup> *Discourse*, Smith, i, 291.

<sup>21</sup> *Ib.*, 256. Cp. Thomas Newton (1587) ("To the Reader in behalf of this Book", *Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Haslewood, i, 13):

his work. Comparing the English translation with the original, Webbe is pleased to show how Phaer has succeeded in preserving "the brave warlike phrase and big sounding kind of thundering speech, in the hot skirmish of battles," and in general to mark the "gallant grace" of English speech, which lacks "neither variety nor currentness of phrase for any matter."<sup>22</sup>

Richard Stanyhurst, like Webbe, admires Virgil for "words so fitly coucht," and is likewise proud of the resources of the English tongue.<sup>23</sup> Desiring by the originality of his translation further "to advance the riches of our speech," he deliberately avoids—not always with happy result—words that had been used by his predecessor Phaer. "I stand so nicely on my pantoffles," he declares, that "I would not run on the score with M. Phaer or any other, by borrowing his terms in so copious and fluent a language as our English tongue is." Though few can equal Phaer for "pickt and lofty words," yet he has "doubled . . . my pains, by reason that, in conferring his translation with mine, I was forced to weed out from my verses such choice words as were forestalled by him, unless they were so feeling as others could not countervail their signification."<sup>24</sup>

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Their words are thundered with such majesty,  
As fitteth right each matter in degree.

Jasper Heywood in the preface to his translation of *Troyennes* (1559, cf. Symmes, *Crit. Dram.*, p. 60), also mentions "the royalty of speech meet for tragedy". Marlowe tries to hit it:

From jiggig veins of rhyming mother wits  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,  
We'll lead you to the stately tents of war  
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine  
Threatening the world with high astounding terms.

But Ben Jonson thinks he overshoots. Though the true artificer's language, he says, "differ from the vulgar somewhat, it shall not fly from all humanity, with the Tamerlanes and Tamer-chams of the late age" (*Discoveries*, p. 27).

<sup>22</sup> *Ib.*, 260, 262.

<sup>23</sup> Ded. *Aeneid*, Smith, i, 137.

<sup>24</sup> Stanyhurst's efforts were not appreciated by some of his contemporaries. Nash (Smith, i, 315) holds up to ridicule his "carterly variety", "thrasonical huffe snuffe", terrible to all mild ears. Puttenham's "stomach can hardly digest" many of his ill-sounding polysyllables and his "copulation of monosyllables" (Smith, ii, 122). Cp. also Hall (Bk. I, Satire VI):

It seems a part of Puttenham's idea of decorum that poetry should have a diction differing from that of prose, one of the advantages of poetry over prose in his opinion being that it is allowed greater "license in choice of words and phrases."<sup>26</sup> Then, within the sphere of metrical composition, he insists, like James VI, that careful attention should be given to the adaptation of diction to the subject-matter. Among others Stanyhurst in this respect has offended. For instance, he has made Prince Aeneas "*trudge* out of Troy,"<sup>26</sup> like a beggar. In general, though some words "become the high style that do not become the other two," it "is disgraced and made foolish and ridiculous by all words affected, counterfeit, and puffed up, as it were a windball carrying more countenance than matter." Similarly objectionable in this style are "all dark and unaccustomed words, or rustical and homely." Decorum of diction should also be observed in the "mean" and "low" styles. Delicate poets in their courtly ditties should avoid long polysyllables, for their usage smacks of the "school of common players."<sup>27</sup> The use of epithets, presumably compound epithets such as graced the style of Sidney and Spenser, Puttenham finds much abused: "Some of our vulgar writers take great pleasure in giving epithets, and do it to almost every word which may receive them." This "should not be so, yea though they were never so proper and apt, for sometimes words suffered to go single do give greater sense and grace than words qualified by attributions."<sup>28</sup>

As to borrowings from foreign languages Puttenham is conservative. Gower's diction is objectionable because of the French element. Very reprehensible also is the affectation of foreign terms as illustrated by such a writer as John Southern, who in his sonnets impudently introduces such French words as "have no manner of conformity with our language either by custom or derivation which may make them tolerable."<sup>29</sup> Puttenham, however, must admit that, owing largely to the "peevish

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If Jove speak English in a thundring cloud,  
Thwick thwack, and riffe raffe, roars he aloud.  
Fie on the forged mint that did create  
New coin of words never articulate.

<sup>26</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*, 178. Cp. Ben Jonson (*Discoveries*, p. 60), words are "to be chose according to the persons we make speak, or the things we speak of".

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*, 132, 159.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, 169.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 64, 171.

affectation" of early "clerks and scholars,"<sup>30</sup> the monosyllabic Saxon has been changed by the introduction of many polysyllables, which, though long "despised for inkhorn terms," are now "reputed the best and most delicate of any other." But "some small admonition" is "not impertinent" for the present day; for you "shall see in some many inkhorn terms so ill affected" introduced by men of learning, "many strange terms of other languages" brought in by travelers and others, "and many dark words and not usual nor well-sounding, though they be daily spoken in Court. Wherefore great heed must be taken by our maker in this point that his choice be good."<sup>31</sup>

Since the conditions demand that the matter of poetic diction "be heedly looked into," Puttenham gives full and specific directions,<sup>32</sup> which also form an interesting commentary on the language of his day and perhaps imply a criticism of Spenser's usage in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. The poet should see to it, he declares, that his diction "be natural, pure, and the most usual of all his country; and for the same purpose rather that which is spoken in the king's Court, or in the good towns and cities within the land, than in the marches and frontiers, or in port towns, where strangers haunt for traffic sake, or yet in universities where scholars use much peevish affectation of words out of the primitive languages, or finally, in any uplandish village or corner of a realm, where is no resort but of poor rustical or uncivil people: neither shall he follow the speech of a craftsman or carter, or other of the inferior sort, though he be inhabitant or bred in the best town and city in this realm, for such persons do abuse good speeches by strange accents or ill shapen sounds and false orthography. But he shall follow generally the better brought up sort, such as the Greeks call *charientes*, men civil and graciously behaved and bred. Our maker, therefore, at these days shall not follow Piers Plowman nor Gower nor Lydgate nor yet Chaucer,<sup>33</sup> for their

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 121. These pedants, says Puttenham, "not content with the usual Norman or Saxon word, would convert the very Latin and Greek word into vulgar French . . . not natural Normans not yet French, but altered Latins, and without any imitation at all".

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, 151. In the unsettled state of the language the critic acknowledges that he himself may be at fault in "using many strange and unaccustomed words".

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, 149, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Cp. Ben Jonson, who in recommending authors for youthful readers admonishes: "Beware of letting them taste Gower or Chaucer at first, lest, falling too much in love with antiquity, and not apprehending the weight, they grow rough and barren in language only . . . Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language; yet I

language is now out of use with us; neither shall he take the terms of Northern-men, such as they use in daily talk, whether they be noblemen or gentlemen or of their best clerks, all is a matter; nor in effect any speech used beyond the river of Trent, though no man can deny but that theirs is the purer English Saxon at this day, yet it is not so courtly nor so current as our Southern English is; no more is the far Western man's speech. Ye shall therefore take the usual speech<sup>34</sup> of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx miles, and not much above."

Nash, who grants that poetry may have greater license than prose, takes in general a conservatively progressive attitude toward matters of diction. In confuting those who might allege "Chaucer's authority" for their "balductums," he declares that if Chaucer had "lived to this age" he would doubtless have discarded "half of the harsher sort of them." "In the spring of Chaucer's flourishing,"<sup>35</sup> art, like young grass, "was glad to peep up through any slime of corruption, to be beholding to she cared not whom for apparel, travailing in those cold countries." There is no reason, however, changing the figure, "that she, a banished Queen into this barren soil, having monarchized it so long amongst the Greeks and Romans, should . . . still be constrained, when she has recovered her state, to wear the robes of adversity and jet it in her old rags, when she is wedded to new prosperity."<sup>36</sup> Consonant with this is Nash's feeling toward monosyllables. Complaining of the way in

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would have him read for his matter, but as Virgil read Ennius". Speaking further of archaisms Jonson says, "Lucretious is scabrous and rough in these; he seeks them: as some do Chaucerisms with us, which were better expunged and banished" (*Discoveries*, pp. 57, 61). Francis Beaumont (Moulton, *Library Crit.*, i, 393) says of Spenser. "His much frequenting Chaucer's ancient speeches causeth many to allow far better of him than otherwise they would".

<sup>34</sup> Cp. Ben Jonson (*Discoveries*, p. 61): "Custom is the most certain mistress of language . . . Yet when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom . . . I call custom of speech . . . the consent of the learned".

<sup>35</sup> Drayton (*Epistle to Henry Reynolds*, Smith, i, lviii) expresses a similar view:

As much as then  
The English language could express to men  
He made it do.

<sup>36</sup> *Strange News*, Smith, ii, 242. Cp. Mulcaster (Smith, i, lvii): "If we must cleave to the eldest and not to the best, we should be eating acorns and wearing Adam's pelts".

which English swarms with "the single money of monosyllables"—books written in them seeming to him like shopkeepers' books that contain nothing but small coins—he would make "a royaler show" by exchanging the "small English . . . four into one . . . according to the Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian."<sup>37</sup> However, he severely reprehends the writer who, apparently abhorring "the English he was born to," "plucks with a solemn periphrases his *ut vales* from the ink-horn," a proceeding that Nash imputes "not so much to the perfection of arts as to the servile imitation of vainglorious tragedians; who contend not so seriously to excel in action as to embowel the clouds in a speech of comparison."<sup>38</sup> But the English poets he proudly asserts, writing three years later, in 1592, have cleansed the language from barbarism and made the common people of London "aspire to a richer purity of speech" than is used by the people of any other nation.<sup>39</sup>

Chapman, though in his translation of Homer avoiding "discountreied affection" and "abhorred affectation," considers discourse ungracious that "falls naked . . . and hath nothing but what mixeth itself with ordinary table talk." As for his "variety of new words," having "none inkpot," he thinks that he might well be thanked for enriching the language. Defending his diction against the censure of critics, he questions why "an elegancy authentically derived, and . . . of the upper house" may not "be entertained as well in their lower consultation with authority of art as their own forgeries lick't up by nature. All tongues have enriched themselves . . . with good neighborly borrowing . . . and why may not ours?"

<sup>37</sup> *Cambridge History*, iii, 508. Richard Carew, though patriotically contending for "all in English", takes a similar view. The powers of the language, he believes, are much enhanced by judicious borrowing, — "gather the honey and leave the dregs". "The long words that we borrow, being intermingled with the short of our own store, make up a perfect harmony, by culling from out which mixture with judgment you may frame your speech according to the matter you must work on, majestic, pleasant, delicate, or manly, more or less, in what sort you please" (*Excellency English Tongue*, Smith, ii, 293). Camden (*Remains concerning Britain*, p. 32) remarks that English has been "beautified and enriched out of other good tongues, partly by enfranchising and endenizing strange words, partly by refining and mollifying old words, partly by implanting new words with artificial composition."

<sup>38</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 308, Thomas Heywood in his *Apology for Actors* declares that the English drama has refined the harsh and broken language until it is now grown most perfect (cf. Symmes, *Crit. Dram.*, p. 185; also Carpenter, *Metaphor and Simile*, p. 198).

<sup>39</sup> *Works*, McKerrow, i, 193.

For wits to cry "to have the ceaseless flowing river of our tongue turned into their frogpool, is a song far from their arrogation of sweetness, and a sin would soon bring the plague of barbarism," which already "comes with mealy-mouthed toleration too savagely upon us."<sup>40</sup>

Daniel, in the spirit of Sidney, expresses a strong reaction against the quest of superficial verbal elegance. Words, he deems, "can be but words"; "it is matter that satisfies the judicial, appear it in what habit it will."<sup>41</sup> We admire the ancients for their inventions rather than for their "smooth-gliding words." "The most judicial and worthy spirits of this land are not so delicate or will owe so much to their ear, as to rest upon the outside of words, and be entertained with sound."<sup>42</sup> "It is not the contexture of words, but the effects of action, that gives glory to the times." "Eloquence and gay words are not of the substance of wit; it is but the garnish of a nice time, the ornaments that do but deck the house of a state, and *imitatur publicos mores*."<sup>43</sup> The verbal affectations of antiquity and novelty are to Daniel deformities next to that of the reformed versifying, and indeed to these he devotes the final paragraph<sup>44</sup> of his *Defense of Rime*. We "bewray ourselves," he declares, "to be both unkind and unnatural to our own native language, in disguising or forging strange or unusual words." He protests, as did Wordsworth two hundred years later, that some writers seem unaccountably possessed to

<sup>40</sup> Pref. *Iliad*, Smith, ii, 305. Chapman, however, has his patriotic prejudice for the English monosyllable (Collier, *Poetical Decameron*, i, 36):

Our monosyllables so kindly fall  
And meet opposed in rime, as they did kiss.  
French and Italian, most immetrical,  
Their many syllables in harsh collision  
Fall as they brake their necks.

He shows fondness for compound epithets in his translation of Homer. For the enthusiasms and excesses of his dramatic diction see Carpenter, *Metaphor and Simile*, pp. 97, 100.

<sup>41</sup> *Defense of Rime*, Smith, ii, 364. Cp. Ben Jonson: "Words above action; matter above words" (Prol. *Cynthia's Revels*); "let your matter run before your words" (*Poetaster*, v, i); "the sense is as the life and soul of language, without which all words are dead" (*Discoveries*, p. 60).

<sup>42</sup> *Ib.*, 381. Yet "well languaged Daniel" was "choice in word" (Lodge, *Wit's Misery*, Works, iv, 57).

<sup>43</sup> *Ib.*, 371, 372.

<sup>44</sup> *Ib.*, 384. Bacon in discussing the diseases of learning reprobrates the "extreme affecting of two extremities: the one antiquity, the other novelty" (*Adv. Learning*, Bk. I, V, 1).

make English verse "seem another kind of speech out of the course of our usual practice, displacing our words,<sup>45</sup> or inventing new, only upon a singularity, when our own accustomed phrase, set in due place, would express us more familiarly and to better delight than all this idle affectation of antiquity or novelty can ever do."<sup>46</sup> And Daniel "cannot but wonder at the strange presumption of some men, that dare so audaciously adventure to introduce any whatsoever foreign words, be they never so strange, and of themselves, as it were, without a parliament, without any consent or allowance, establish them as free-denizens<sup>47</sup> in our language."

<sup>45</sup> Webbe finds it "tolerable in a verse to set words so extraordinarily as other speech will not admit", though "it is a wonder to see the folly of many" who use "too much of this overthwart placing, or displacing of words" both in their poetry and prose (Smith, i, 274). Gascoigne also advises "to use your verse after the English phrase" and smiles at the simplicity of devisers who "might as well have said it in plain English phrase and . . . better pleased all ears" (Smith, i, 53).

<sup>46</sup> Cp. Daniel's *Delia*, No. LV:

Let others sing of Knights and Paladins  
In aged accents and untimely words.

<sup>47</sup> Peele (*Ad Maccenatem Prologus*), who commends Campion for richly clothing "conceit with well-made words", also praises Harington as

Well-lettered and discreet  
That hath so purely naturalized  
Strange words and made them all free-denizens.

Cp. Ben Jonson (*Poetaster*, V, i):

You must not hunt for wild outlandish terms,  
To stuff out a peculiar dialect;  
But let your matter run before your words.  
And if at any time you chance to meet  
Some Gallo-Belgic phrase, you shall not straight  
Rack your poor verse to give it entertainment,  
But let it pass; and do not think yourself  
Much damnified, if you do leave it out,  
When nor your understanding nor the sense  
Could well receive it. This fair abstinence,  
In time, will render you more sound and clear:  
And this have I prescribed to you

This advice is delivered by Virgil to the abject Crispinus (Marston), who had just disgorged a hideous vocabulary of "spurious snotteries". Shakespeare's jocosity in his satire of the affectations and pedantries of diction is much more amiable, though he also makes these faults highly ridiculous in such characters as Armado and Holofernes, both of whom "have lived long in the alms-basket of words" (*Love's Labor's Lost*, V, i, 39). The interest of the age, as well as that of Shakespeare himself, in mat-

Daniel's philosophical breadth of mind, however,—like that of Burke at the end of his contention against a greater change—asserts itself here as elsewhere and he concludes: "But this is but a character of that perpetual revolution which we see to be in all things that never remain the same: and we must herein be content to submit ourselves to the law of time, which in few years will make all that for which we now contend *Nothing*."

Although the critics of this period express many divergent views on matters of words, they are generally agreed that in one way or another the diction of English poetry ought to be enriched and refined to the highest possible degree of excellence and beauty. In this desire center the love of freshness, novelty, and gallant bravery of speech; the delight in richness, elegance, splendor; the dread of barbarism and the aversion to lowness or plainness; the regard for decorum and the craving for polish and distinction. This quest of verbal excellence is not limited to poetry, and indeed except for an occasional acknowledgment of poetic license and occasional departures in diction like that of Spenser, which are not generally acceptable, there is no very distinct recognition of a diction for poetry different from that of other imaginative literature.<sup>48</sup> Differentiation between high style and low style, however, in both prose and poetry as well as in social discourse is a tenet of critical theory, the law of decorum, though this law is subordinated to the desire for a larger and nobler power of expression.

The necessity of enlarging the capabilities of the poetic vocabulary involved either borrowing from foreign languages or the development of native resources by such means as the use of archaisms and the compounding of words. Either of these alternatives carried objections. It was galling to the pride and patriotism of Englishmen to borrow from other nations the elegance they emulated. On the other hand, the dread of old-fashioned crudeness and plainness and the ambition to avoid the reproach of barbarism hindered the aspirations of those who would build up a poetic diction from native resources. Largely because of this dread, even Spenser's attempt to give new grace and charm to the vocabulary of poetry by the restoration of old English words was apparently

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ters of diction is frequently reflected in the plays. It is noteworthy, too, that the great master of words, through his characters and in his sonnets, laments the inadequacy of language to express man's mighty world of sense, thought, and emotion.

<sup>48</sup> The general norm of diction preserved in poetry was doubtless due in part to the dominance of the poetic drama where, as Ben Jonson says, "words are the peoples" — though "there is a choice of them to be made" (*Discoveries*, p. 60). Cp. Wordsworth, Pref. *Lyrical Ballads*.

misunderstood, and in general not appreciated.<sup>49</sup> The compounding of words, however, having the authority of the Greeks as well as the French, was less frowned upon and became more the fashion, although the abuse of the practice was reprehended by the later critics. Excesses in general, it was the business of critics to condemn, and though they usually took a tentative, open-minded attitude toward the numerous endeavors to improve the diction of English poetry, they were alert to protect the language from manglement by extravagances in borrowing or otherwise. They were eager, too, as poetry advanced, to recognize and encourage all progress toward perfection; admiring artfulness of phrasing, aptness, sweetness, and fluency; and, whatever the origin, glorying in the increasing wealth and beauty of a language for poetry that they felt to be distinctively superior and distinctively English.

### III. VERSE

To the various problems of versification Elizabethan critics devote more attention than to any other phase of the art of poetry. Although this verse criticism centers largely about the question of adopting classical metres, the discussions also include various other topics, such as the relative merits of verse and prose, stanza, rime sequence and rime syllables, alliteration, accent, cæsure, orthography, harmony, decorum, etc. Naturally, there is much diversity of opinion; the discussions in general, however, are tentative and experimental, even the controversies being prompted by the earnest desire to improve and advance English poetic art.

Ascham, the first of a line of critics to inveigh against rime and to advocate the use of quantity in English poetry, shows the origin of the "hexameter fury" to have been in pleasant talks with M. Cheke and M. Watson in the "sweet time spent at Cambridge."<sup>1</sup> All three were eager that Englishmen might be shamed by the barbaric origin among the

<sup>49</sup> This means of enriching poetic diction therefore must be largely deferred to an age less distrustful of barbarism and more appreciative of Chaucer and the old ballads, though the lyrics of the Elizabethan drama happily did not escape the influence of the native lyrics of the middle ages.

<sup>1</sup> *Schoolmaster* (1570), Smith, i, 29. Cf. also pp. 30-35. Ascham's preservation in his *Schoolmaster* of Watson's translation of the first two lines of the *Odyssey* affords a specimen of the earliest use of quantitative verse in English.

All travelers do gladly report great praise of Ulysses,  
For that he knew many men's manners and saw many cities.

Goths and Huns of "rude beggarly riming," which was finally "received into England by men of excellent wit" but "small learning and less judgment in that behalf." Now, however, continues, Ascham, "when men know the difference, and have the examples . . . surely to follow rather the Goths in riming than the Greeks in true versifying were even to eat acorns with swine, when we may freely eat wheat bread among men." Chaucer, Surrey, Wyatt, Phaer, and others, he thinks, "have gone as far to their great praise as the copy they followed could carry them," but if such good wit and diligence, not content "with that barbarous and rude riming," could have followed the best examples, these writers might have been "counted among men of learning and skill more like unto the Grecians than unto the Gothians in handling of their verse."

If any are angry with Ascham for misliking rime they may for company be angry with Quintilian, who had less cause for his dislike than men of this day. Quintilian also affords a helpful point on versifying in his teaching that the dactyl stumbles rather than stands upon monosyllables. And applying this Ascham observes that "our English tongue, having in use chiefly words of one syllable which commonly be long," is not adapted to the dactyl, and therefore "doth not well receive *carmen heroicum*" for which the dactyl is the aptest foot. But "though *carmen exametrum* doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly" in the English tongue, English "will receive *carmen iambicum* as naturally as either Greek or Latin." The only difficulty is that on account of ignorance and idleness "men will not labor to come to any perfectness at all." Not having "reverend regard to learning, skill, and judgment," they will not use "diligence in searching out not only just measure in every metre, as every ignorant person may easily do, but also true quantity in every foot and syllable, as only the learned shall be able to do." This last consideration is a strong motive with Ascham as with later advocates of classical metres. The adoption of quantitative verse would deter "rash ignorant heads," who, for lack of learning or on account of the labor involved, would not "be so busy as everywhere they be," stuffing the shops "full of lewd and rude rimes." Those who abet such performances by defending rime, "do so either for lack of knowledge what is best, or else of very envy that any should perform that in learning" which they cannot achieve.

The noble Earl of Surrey, "first of all Englishmen in translating the fourth book of Virgil," has "by good judgment", declares Ascham,

"avoided the fault of riming," yet he has not "fully hit perfect and true versifying." Though he has observed "just number and even feet," the feet are "not distinct by true quantity of syllables" and are therefore unfit—"feet in our English versifying without quantity and joints be sure signs that the verse is either born deformed, unnatural, and lame, and so very unseemly to look upon," except to goggle-eyed men.

This fault of riming, Ascham is glad to note, is also reprehended in Italy, especially by Figliucci, who earnestly exhorts his nation "to leave off their rude barbarousness in riming, and follow diligently the excellent Greek and Latin examples in true versifying." "Even poor England," however, Ascham thinks, "prevented Italy" in first spying out this fault—presumably through Cheke and Watson—and for this he rejoices. As for English writers who have never gone farther than the school of Petrarch and Ariosto abroad or of Chaucer at home, they may "have pleasure to wander blindly still" in their "foul wrong way," though they should not envy others who seek "the fairest and rightest way." But Ascham exhorts the "goodly wits of England, which, apt by nature and willing by desire, give themselves to poetry, that they, rightly understanding the bringing in of rimes, would labor, as Virgil and Horace did in Latin, to make perfect also this point of learning in our English tongue."

Thomas Blenerhasset, attempting in his *Complaint of Cadwallader* in the *Mirror for Magistrates* to put into practice the theories of the Cambridge scholars, produces unrimed English alexandrines which he thinks agree very well "with the Roman verse called iambus." This he deems "so proper for the English tongue that it is great marvel that these ripe-witted gentlemen of England have not left their Gotish kind of riming . . . and imitated the learned Latins and Greeks."<sup>2</sup> Evidently, the seed sown by Ascham has taken root. Abra-

<sup>2</sup> Sec. part *Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. 1578 (see Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Crit.*, p. 23). Blenerhasset with enthusiasm continues: "O what brave beams of goodly timber might be found amongst Churchyard's Chips, if he had not affected the riming order of his predecessors? Which metre made not only him inferior unto Horace, but it also made a great inequality to be betwixt Buckhurst and Homer: betwixt Phaer and Virgil: betwixt Turberville and Tibullus: betwixt Golding and Ovid: betwixt George Gascoigne and Seneca: for all these coming near unto Marot whom they did imitate, did put a great distance betwixt them and the Latins, with whom they might have been equal, even with as little labor, and with much more praise and renown. Truly (quoth Mercury) let it be as it is, you shall see good sport shortly. I smile to see how Zoilous and Momus will cry out: O vain glorious head, which for a singularity

ham Fleming also becomes an adversary of rime, before his clumsy translation of Virgil's bucolics (1575) calling it "foolish rime . . . . the nice observation whereof many times darkeneth, corrupteth, perverteth, and falsifieth both the sense and signification."<sup>3</sup>

Gascoigne in his *Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Rime*<sup>4</sup> (1575) makes no direct reference to quantitative verse. First, impressing the idea that the "most necessary point" in making a poem is "to ground it upon some fine invention," he insists that the poet should not allow "pleasure of rime" or anything else to carry him from it. He next lays down the precept: "Hold the same measure wherewith you begin, whether it be a verse of six syllables, eight, ten, twelve, etc." Many poets of his day, he says, are faulty in beginning with an alternation of twelve and fourteen syllables and after a few verses carelessly falling into fourteen and fourteen. Every word in the verse should be so placed as to receive its natural accent. "Commonly in English rimes," Gascoigne "dare not call them English verses," "we use none other . . . . but a foot of two syllables," namely, the iambic. In times past other metres were employed. "Our father Chaucer hath used the same liberty in feet and measures that the Latinists do use"; and Gascoigne explains sagaciously that "although his lines are not always of one self same number of syllables, yet . . . . the longest verse, and that which hath most syllables in it, will fall (to the ear) correspondent unto that which hath fewest syllables in it; and likewise, that which hath fewest syllables shall be found yet to consist of words that have such natural sound, as may seem equal in length to a verse which hath many more syllables of lighter accents." And here, apparently in view of the greater variety in the older poetry, Gascoigne laments "that we are fallen into such a plain and simple manner of writing, that there is none other foot used but one; whereby our poems may justly be called rythms, and cannot by any right challenge the name of a verse. But since it is so, let us take the ford as we find it"; and Gascoigne hopes to set down such rules "that even in this plain foot of two syllables" the poet will "wrest no word from his natural and usual sound," and he gives illustrations apropos.

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doth endeavor to erect a new kind of poetry in England". This was about the time of the Areopagus enterprise.

<sup>3</sup> Collier's *Poetical Decameron*, i, 93.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, i, 48-57.

Polysyllables, Gascoigne thinks, should be avoided, for they "cloy a verse and make it unpleasant," whereas, monosyllables are truer English, and "more easily fall to be short or long as occasion requireth . . . or of an indifferent sound." He exhorts the poet to "beware of rime without reason"; that is, he should not allow the demand for a rime to alter the invention or spoil the sense—"do rather search the bottom of your brain for apt words than change good reason for rumbling rime." Avoid the practice of "many writers which do not know the use of any other figure than that which is expressed in repetition of sundry words beginning all with one letter." "Modestly used" alliteration "lendeth good grace to a verse," but Gascoigne is disgusted with those who "so hunt a letter to death."

After explaining *cæsura*, which should come at the end of even syllables at the middle of the verse<sup>5</sup>—though in rime royal it "forceth not where the pause be until the end of the line,"—Gascoigne describes "the sundry sorts of verses which we use nowadays." The first described, rime royal (decasyllbic, stanza *a b a b b c c*), is surely "a royal kind of verse" and serves "best for grave discourses." Ballad verse (without derogatory comment) may be of six, eight, or ten syllables, and is written in stanzas of six lines, four with cross rime followed by a couplet. Such verse serves best for dances or light matters, matters of love. Then there is the rondlet, "of such measure as best liketh the writer," most apt for adage or proverb. "Some think all poems (being short) may be called sonnets," but Gascoigne specifies "fourteen lines, every line containing ten syllables," with three stanzas of cross rimes and a couplet to "conclude the whole"—the form that was used by Shakespeare. "Sonnets serve as well in matters of love as of discourse." After mentioning a few other forms less used, though omitting blank verse, Gascoigne declares that "the commonest sort of verse which we use nowadays" is "the long verse of twelve and fourteen syllables." He does not know how to name it unless he "should say that it doth consist of poulter's measure, which giveth twelve for one dozen and fourteen for another." This is "nowadays used in all themes," though in Gascoigne's judgment "it would serve best for psalms and hymns." "A notable kind of rime,

<sup>5</sup> "The *cæsura* in *The Steel Glass* occurs almost invariably after the fourth syllable, and is regularly marked by Gascoigne with a comma" (J. W. Cunliffe, *Cambridge History*, iii, 237). Gascoigne also follows his own instruction, in that alliteration is "modestly used" and polysyllables avoided. These observances noticeably affect his verse. The use of the regular medial *cæsura* seems prevalent in the early Elizabethan period.

called riding rime," which he almost forgets to mention, "is such as our master and father Chaucer used in his *Canterbury Tales*, and in divers other delectable and light enterprises." Gascoigne's closing advice is, "In all these sorts of verses . . . . avoid prolixity and tediousness, and ever, as near as you can, do finish the sentence and meaning at the end of every staff where you write staves, and at the end of every two lines where you write by couples or poulter's measure: for I see many writers which draw their sentences in length, and make an end at latter Lammas."

A good deal of light on motives for the imitation of classical metres and on the difficulties encountered, is afforded by the correspondence<sup>6</sup> between Spenser and Harvey. In October, 1579, Spenser writes from Leicester House to his friend Master Harvey, fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, of an enterprise exceedingly interesting to the latter. Mentioning Master Sidney and Master Dyer as having him "in some use of familiarity," Spenser declares: "And now they have proclaimed in their ἀπελὼ παράγω a general surceasing and silence of bald rimers, and also of the very best too: instead whereof, they have, by authority of their whole senate, prescribed certain laws and rules of quantities of English syllables for English verse, having had thereof already great practice, and drawn me to their faction." A little farther on Spenser remarks: "I am, of late, more in love with my English versifying than with riming; which I should have done long since, if I would then have followed your counsel. *Sed te solum iam tum suspicibar cum Aschamo sapere: nunc Aulam video egregios alere Poëtas Anglicos.*" By a letter from Harvey of the preceding week, Spenser perceives that his friend continues his "old exercise of versifying in English: which glory I had now thought should have been only ours here at London and the Court." The verses sent he likes "passingly well" and reproaches Harvey for not imparting his "hidden pains in this kind," though he finds that once or twice he breaks Master Drant's rules. Warning Harvey that he is fast following and likely to overtake him in the new poetry, Spenser requites him with some verses which he warrants "precisely perfect for the feet . . . . and vary not one inch from the rule."

Harvey, who had evidently for some time been advocating classical metres, is rejoiced at the new-found Areopagus and makes greater account of the two worthy gentlemen, Sidney and Dyer, "than of two

<sup>6</sup> See Smith, i, 87-122.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.*, 89, 90.

hundredth Dionisii Areopagitae, or the very notablest senators that ever Athens did afford of that number." He, however, deems Spenser's warrant not sufficiently good to assure precisely perfect feet in his versing and points out several faults; though these may be owing to gorbellied Drant's rules, with which Harvey is unacquainted.<sup>8</sup> Harvey encloses some verses of his own for Spenser.

Spenser likes Harvey's "English hexameters so exceedingly well" that he inures his own pen sometimes in that kind, which he finds neither so hard nor so harsh but that "it will easily and fairly yield itself to our mother tongue." The chief difficulty is in the accent, which sometimes gapeth or "yawneth ill favoredly" or "seemeth like a lame gosling that draweth one leg after her." "But it is to be won with custom, and rough words must be subdued with use. For why a God's name, may not we, as else the Greeks, have the kingdom of our own language, and measure our accents by the sound, reserving the quantity to the verse?" Spenser then pens a tetrastich to let Harvey see his "old use of toying in rimes turned into your artificial straightness of verse." Whether in jest or earnest here, he heartily wishes that Harvey would either send the rules and precepts that he observes in quantities, "or else follow mine, that M. Philip Sidney gave me, being the very same which M. Drant devised, but enlarged with M. Sidney's own judgment, and augmented with my observations." Otherwise, following different rules, Spenser fears they might "overthrow one another and be overthrown of the rest." Again professing his "special liking of English versifying," he declares that he is, "shortly at convenient leisure," to furnish Harvey with some token of his skill in this kind in a book to be entitled *Epithalamion Thamesis*, "a work . . . of much labor."<sup>9</sup>

Harvey replies in a long letter,<sup>10</sup> "with sundry proper examples and some precepts of our English reformed versifying." He "cannot choose but thank and honor the good Angel (whether it were Gabriel or some other) that put so good a motive into the heads of those two excellent gentlemen M. Sidney and M. Dyer, the two very Diamonds of her Majesty's Court . . . as to help forward our new famous enterprise for the exchanging of barbarous and balductum rimes with artificial

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, 95, 97. Drant's rules for quantitative verse were apparently never written down, at least they are not extant. Drant died in 1578.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, 98-100. Cf. *Faery Queen*, Bk. IV, Canto XI: "Where Thames doth the Medway wed".

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, 101 ff.

verses"; and he doubts "not but their lively example and practice will prevail a thousand times more in short space than the dead advertisement and persuasion of M. Ascham to the same effect." He "would gladly be acquainted with M. Drant's prosody" and the augmentations made by Sidney and Spenser; however, he believes that his own rules "will fall out not greatly repugnant, though peradventure somewhat different." Of one point Harvey feels assured, namely, that for the "infallible certainty of our English artificial prosody" the reformers must first of all universally . . . agree upon one and the same orthography, in all points conformable and proportionate to our common natural prosody." Although he dare not without further consulting his pillow set down general precepts for the new versifying, he is not "greatly squeamish of . . . particular examples" from which they may be guessed, and he sends several specimens for Spenser's criticism and admiration.

Harvey, however, cannot close his letter without expressing himself decidedly on the question of accent and position. In reply to Spenser's idea of subduing words with use, he declares that he will not consent, though charged "with the authority of five hundred Master Drant's, to make your carpenter, our carpenter, an inch longer or bigger than God and his English people have made him." Citing numerous examples to show that "the Latin is no rule for us," he insists that "we are to be moderated and overruled by the usual and common received sound, and not to devise any counterfeit fantastical accent of our own," or to go farther in prosody or orthography "than we are licensed and authorized by the ordinary use, and custom, and propriety, and idiom, and, as it were, majesty of our speech: which I account the only infallible and sovereign rule of all rules." "In short," concludes Harvey, "position neither maketh short nor long in our tongue, but so far as we get her good leave," though peradventure, upon diligent examination of particulars, "some the like analogy and uniformity might be found out in some other respect, that should as universally and canonically hold amongst us as position doth with the Latins and Greeks."

Thirteen years later, in 1593, Harvey was still unreconciled to "Dran-ting of verses";<sup>11</sup> and though he apparently never attained the desired "uniformity" in English versifying, he was not averse to being "epitaphed the inventor of the English hexameter—whom learned M. Stanyhurst imitated in his Virgil, and excellent Sir Philip Sidney dis-

<sup>11</sup> *Pierce's Supererogation*, Smith, ii, 272.

daigned not to follow in his *Arcadia* and elsewhere." And English, he thinks, "is nothing too good to imitate the Greek, or Latin, or other eloquent languages that honor the hexameter as the sovereign of verses and the high controller of rimes."<sup>12</sup> Spenser's failure to put forth in quantitative verse his *Epithalamion* *Thamesis* and his early abandonment of "the new famous enterprise" for overthrowing rime, sufficiently indicate his apostasy; and his rimes, discrediting the baldunctum kind, were in general acceptable to those who desired a more elegant and learned English verse than had been current.<sup>13</sup>

Sir Philip Sidney's desire to make a distinction between verse writer and real poet leads him to emphasize the subordination of verse as an element of poetry. "It is not riming and versing," he declares, "that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate"; "one may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry." Verse is the apparel or "ornament and no cause to poetry, sith there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets." The senate of poets, however, "hath chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning, as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them." But though verse and poesy are separable, "presuppose it were inseparable . . . truly it were an inseparable commendation. For if . . . speech next to reason be the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality, that cannot be praiseless which doth most polish that blessing of speech, which considers each word, not only . . . by his forcible quality but by his best measured quantity." Verse, moreover, far exceeds prose in mnemonic value; "being

<sup>12</sup> Smith, ii, 230. "In the next seat to these hexameters, adonics, and iambics", says Harvey, "I set those that stand upon the number, not in metre, such as my lord of Surrey is said first to have put forth in print, and my lord Buckhurst and M. Norton in the tragedy of *Gorboduc*, M. Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*" (Smith, i, 126).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Tears of the Muses*, (ll. 545 ff), Polyhymnia:

Then fittest are these ragged rimes for me,  
To tell my sorrows that exceeding be.  
For the sweet numbers and melodious measures,  
With which I wont the winged words to tie,  
And make a tuneful diapason of pleasures,  
Now being let to run at liberty  
By those which have no skill to rule them right,  
Have now quite lost their natural delight.

in itself sweet and orderly and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it."<sup>14</sup>

Sidney's interest in the Areopagus enterprise of introducing classical versifying was doubtless, as Spenser in his letter to Harvey implies, mainly that of silencing bald rimers. From his attitude a little later in the *Apology*, however, it seems evident that he soon came to realize that the poet-apes could mangle poetry by "versing"<sup>15</sup> as well as by riming; and his attempts to silence them take another direction in which he subordinates to other and higher values in poetry both riming and versing and becomes neutral toward these two modes. "Now of versifying," he says, "there are two sorts, the one ancient, the other modern: the ancient marked the quantity of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse; the modern observing only number (with some regard of the accent), the chief life of it standeth in that like sounding of the words, which we call rime." Which is the more excellent "would bear many speeches." The ancient is doubtless "more fit for music, both words and tune observing quantity, and more fit lively to express divers passions, by the low and lofty sound of the well-weighed syllable." The modern likewise, "with his rimes, striketh a certain music to the ear: and in fine, sith it doth delight, though by another way, it obtains the same purpose: there being in either sweetness, and wanting in neither majesty. Truly the English, before any other language I know, is fit for both sorts." After giving some reasons for this superiority, Sidney reverts to rime, in which, "though we do not observe quantity, yet we observe the accent very precisely" and in this also English is superior to other languages and has the advantage of greater freedom in accent because of the abundance of monosyllables.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Stanyhurst in translating Virgil takes it upon himself "to execute some part of Master Ascham his will . . . in beauti-

<sup>14</sup> *Apology*, Smith, i, 159, 160, 182, 183.

<sup>15</sup> As Daniel points out later (cf. Smith, ii, 363). Doubtless the attempts by Harvey and Stanyhurst were sufficient to provoke Sir Philip's defection.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, i, 204, 205. Sidney's experiments in classical versing in the *Arcadia*, where as Pope says the verse "halts ill on Roman feet" (cf. Courthope's *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 297), do not seem to have aroused any such enthusiasm in their author as in Gabriel Harvey, who claims credit as a sort of sponsor (cf. Smith, ii, 231). An interesting instance of the observance of decorum in the use of verse form occurs in the verse of the *Arcadia* (Complete Poems, Grosart, ii, 28) where Sidney allows his higher characters to speak in hexameters but deliberately drops to rime for the shepherd, for

A shepherd's tale no height of style desires.

fyng our English language with heroical verses."<sup>17</sup> He trusts that he offers no man injury if he assumes to himself "the maidenhead of all works that hath been before this time in print . . . . divulged in this kind of verse,"<sup>18</sup> English hexameter. Not having been tied to precedent, he has felt at liberty to decide on the length of English syllables; but the advantage is not so great as it might seem, for if, for instance, he should in one place make *season* long he could not change it where it would fit better as short. The point, however, which Stanyhurst desires especially to impress is "the odds between verses and rime" and the superiority of the former. "In the one," he declares, "every foot, every word, every syllable, yea every letter is to be observed: in the other, the last word is only to be heeded,"—and quoting a number of ridiculous rimes he exclaims with disgust: "What Tom Towly is so simple that will not attempt to be a wooden rithmour!" The readiest way to overcome such "doltish coystrels" and discredit their work, he thinks, "is for the learned to apply themselves wholly . . . . to the true making of verses in such wise as the Greeks and Latins, the fathers of knowledge, have done."<sup>19</sup>

Stanyhurst, like Harvey, finding it somewhat difficult to reconcile position and accent, refuses to be "stiffly tied to the ordinances of the Latins" and objects that "precisianists do attribute greater prerogative to the Latin tongue than reason will afford, and less liberty to our language than nature may permit." Copiously illustrating the point that English words may not always be made to conform to Latin rules of quantity, he attempts to anticipate the objections of "grammatical precisians"; and though he cannot set forth all the details of his prosody, he in theory espouses the principles that "the final end of a verse is to please the ear" and that "nothing can be done or spoken against nature," every language requiring that poets give heed to its "particular lore."<sup>20</sup> Acting apparently on the suggestion of Harvey<sup>21</sup> in a letter to Spenser,

<sup>17</sup> Ded. *Aeneid* (1582), Smith, i, 137.

<sup>18</sup> *Ib.*, 139. Harvey in 1592, defending himself as "inventor of the English hexameter", declares that he was by "learned M. Stanyhurst imitated in his Virgil" (Smith, ii, 231).

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, 140, 141. Stanyhurst wrote "An Epitaph against rime entitled *Commune Defunctorum*, such as our unlearned rithmours accustomably make upon the death of every Tom Tyler, as if it were a last for every one his foot, in which the quantities of syllables are not to be heeded" (*English Scholars' Library*, No. 10).

<sup>20</sup> Pref. *ib.*, 141-2, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, i, 102.

Stanyhurst uses in his translation a curious orthography intended to conform to his prosodic theory. In general, his work tended to discredit the reform that he desired to promote.<sup>22</sup>

King James VI begins his treatise on verse<sup>23</sup> with rules for riming, being evidently not averse to this feature of poetry. His principal direction here is to rime always to the last accented syllable, which is the last foot, for when other syllables follow they are eaten up by the accent and are not to be counted as feet; and since "this tail neither serves for color nor foot" and "ye will scarcely get many words to rime unto it," it is best to avoid long words at the end of the line.

Another reason for avoiding such a rime is that "it keeps no flowing"; and flowing is the next point explained. First, "all syllables are divided in three kinds": short, long, and indifferent. In our verse the first syllable is "short, the second long, the third short, the fourth long . . . and so forth to the end of the line"; and to determine this the "ear must be the only judge." The number of feet in a line should always be even, except in broken verses, which are out of rule. Lines should, not exceed fourteen feet nor have less than four. There should be a "section" or *cæsura* "in the midst of every line," long or short, and "section" simply means an even and especially long syllable, appropriate for the rest in singing. This syllable and the second and last in the line should be longer than any others. Whole lines of monosyllables should be avoided—notwithstanding Gascoigne—for most monosyllables "are indifferent" and may be either long or short "as ye like"; and in such case the second, *cæsural*, and last syllables will not "be longer nor the other feet in the same line" as they ought to be. For these places the poet should choose words "of divers syllables and not indifferent." Such are the principal "parts of flowing, the very touchstone whereof is music."

Do not, however, says James, put in "words either *metri causa* or yet for filling forth the number of feet" unless they are such as seem necessary to express the sense. Eschew a long rabble of proper nouns,

<sup>22</sup> Abraham Fraunce, also active in the new versification, was more successful than Stanyhurst. Even Nash commends his "excellent translation" of Watson's *Amintas*; though Ben Jonson thought him "in his English hexameters . . . a fool" (Smith, i, 422). Preceding the *Amintas* (1592), he had in 1591 prepared and dedicated to Lady Pembroke two elaborate compositions in hexameters: *The Countess of Pembroke's Emanuel*; and *The Countess of Pembroke's Ivychurch*, the *Emanuel* being accompanied by hexameter versions of some of the psalms.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, i, 212-225.

for it is difficult to make them flow well in a verse.<sup>24</sup> "Let all your verse be literal, so far as may be, whatsoever kind they be of, but specially tumbling verse for flyting. By literal I mean that the most part of your line shall run upon a letter, as this tumbling line runs upon F": "Fetching food for to feed it fast forth of the fairy". Though "all others keep the rule," that is, are iambic, this tumbling verse "has two short and one long through all the line," but for the most part it "keeps no kind nor rule of flowing," and hence is called tumbling verse.

In his last chapter James, giving illustrations of a "few kinds . . . as the best," indicates his "opinion for what subjects each kind of . . . verse is meetest to be used." The rimed couplet "serves only for long histories, and yet are not verse." This is Gascoigne's "riding rime" of Chaucer, most apt for "a merry tale." "For the description of heroic acts, martial and knightly feats of arms," use "heroical" verse—a stanza of nine decasyllabic lines with two rimes. For "high and grave subjects" use "ballat royal," a decasyllabic stanza of eight lines (*a b a b b c b c*). "For tragical matters, complaints, or testaments," use "Troilus verse"—Gascoigne's "rime royal." "For flyting, or invectives," use tumbling verse; and for "compendious praising" of books or authors, or for "histories where sundry sentences and change of purposes are required, use sonnet verse," and James refers to examples of his own composition. "In matters of love" use "common verse," Gascoigne's "ballade," an octosyllabic stanza composed of a quatrain and a couplet. All of these kinds "may be applied to any kind of subject, but rather," says James, "to these whereof I have spoken."

Webbe, in his *Discourse of English Poetry, together with the Author's judgment touching the reformation of our English Verse*, as the title indicates, devotes a good deal of attention to matters of verse. Considering English poetry in an unsatisfactory state, he would stir the "learned laureate masters" to reform, that they might ratify and set down "some perfect platform or *prosodia* of versifying . . . either in imitation of Greeks and Latins, or, where it would scant abide the touch of their rules, the like observations selected and established by the natural affectation of the speech."<sup>25</sup>

Following Master Ascham in attributing to the Goths and Huns "and other barbarous nations" the origin of "this tinkerly verse which

<sup>24</sup> "Names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse" (*Much Ado*, V, ii, 33).

<sup>25</sup> Smith, i, 229.

we call rime," Webbe earnestly wishes that Master Harvey with others might continue in a more serious way the furtherance of "that reformed kind of poetry" which he "did once begin to ratify."<sup>26</sup> But this "rude kind of verse," which "discrediteth our speech, as borrowed from the barbarians," is "so ingrafted by custom, and frequented by the most part" that Webbe "may not utterly disallow it" lest he "should seem to call in question the judgment of all our famous writers, which have won eternal praise by their memorable works compiled in that verse"—a consideration that Daniel later uses against Campion. Rime, moreover, Webbe admits, "wheresoever it began . . . in our English tongue beareth as good grace, or rather better, than in any other." But he has faith that our speech is "capable of a far more learned manner of versifying."<sup>27</sup>

Before declaring this "learned manner," however, Webbe takes up "our accustomed English rime," considering most requisite three "principal observations": first, that verses should conform in metre; second, that words should not be so placed as to wrest them from their "natural inclination" or "true quantity"; third, that words should "fall together mutually in rime . . . not disordered for the rime's sake, nor the sense hindered."<sup>28</sup> Of the "almost infinite" kinds of English verses, varying in metre, rime, and stanza, he proposes to explain and illustrate some of the "best and most frequented," to avoid tediousness limiting himself chiefly to the different sorts in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. After exhibiting Spenser's verse as "authority in this matter" and showing how different kinds are adapted to different purposes,<sup>29</sup> he proceeds to the question of "natural force or quantity." The "old iambic stroke" seems to be the natural and characteristic metre of English verse. And "though our words cannot well be forced to abide the touch of position and other rules of *prosodia*, yet is there such a natural force or quantity in each word, that it will not abide any place but one, without some foul disgrace"; and this Webbe illustrates. The poet, therefore, should take special heed not to place a word so that it

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*, 240, 245. Neither in his review of English poets nor elsewhere does Webbe mention the effort of Stanyhurst in the "reformed kind", published in 1582. He would doubtless have been delighted by such work in the cause as that of Dr. Campion in 1602.

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*, 266, 267.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, 268. For these "three special points" Webbe is indebted to Gascoigne (see Smith, i, 49).

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*, 270-272.

will be "wrested against his natural propriety", or accent. Concerning rime, Webbe is persuaded that it "hath been the greatest decay of that good order of versifying which might ere this have been established in our speech." Perhaps the best that can be said of it is that it shows the "plentiful fulness of our speech"; and in view of this and the force of custom he, with aid from Gascoigne, gives instructions for riming.<sup>30</sup>

Webbe next proceeds to give his "simple judgment" concerning the "true kind of versifying in imitation of Greeks and Latins,"<sup>31</sup> being persuaded that if it had been sufficiently practiced English might "long ere this have aspired to as full perfection as . . . any other tongue whatsoever." "Now, it seemeth not current for an English verse to run upon true quantity and those feet which the Latins use, because it is strange, and the other barbarous custom, being within the compass of every base wit, hath worn it out of credit or estimation." But if writers of learning and judgment would practice "that commendable writing in true verse" they might enlarge the credit of English poetry so that it "should not stoop to the best of them all." Some object that English words are not amenable to Latin prosody, but we can alter the rule "according to the quality of our word" and where there is disagreement "establish a rule of our own." Surely "if anyone of sound judgment and learning should put forth some famous work, containing divers forms of true verses, fitting the measures according to the matter, it would of itself be a sufficient authority, without any prescription of rules, to the most part of poets for them to follow and by custom to ratify." Indeed, Webbe has faith that "he that shall with heedful judgment make trial of the English words shall not find them so gross or unapt but that they will become any one of the most accustomed sorts of Latin or Greek verses meetly, and run thereon somewhat currently." The author himself, "with simple skill," has composed some verses which may serve to show the possibilities, though as a pioneer he has found it "a troublesome and unpleasant piece of labor."

After explaining the various feet of Latin verse, Webbe comes to the knotty point of quantity in English words and the application of Latin rules. One difficulty is that "excepting a few of our monosyllables, which naturally should most of them be long, we have almost none that will stand fitly in a short foot." Some exception should therefore be made "against the precise observation of position and certain other of

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, 273-275.

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, 278 ff.

the rules." Webbe has also felt in his own experiments the need of "some direction in such words as fall not within the compass of Greek or Latin rules." Rather than "notoriously impugn the Latin rules," however, he has always sacrificed the best words, though even so he must confess to many faults. Most monosyllables he has been forced to make short, and he has found that middle syllables that will not come under the precinct of position "must needs be a little wrested," *mournfully*, for instance, he has changed to *mournfūly*.

"The most famous verse of all," Webbe declares, "is called *hexametrum epicum*," and he gives a specimen:

Tītŷrūs hāppīļŷ thōu liest tūmblīng ūndēr ā bēech trēe.

This is better suited to English speech than any other kind of quantitative verse, at least until we have further rules. The first to attempt it "in English should seem to be the earl of Surrey, who translated some part of Virgil into verse indeed, but without regard of true quantity of syllables."<sup>32</sup> As a model of perfection Webbe quotes the "famous distichon, which is common in the mouths of all men," made by Master Watson, fellow of St. John's College, forty years past":

All trāvēlērs dō glādīļŷ rēpōrt grēat prāise tō Uļŷssēs  
Fōr thāt hē knēw māņŷ mēn's mānnērs, ānd sāw māņŷ citiēs.

Referring also to "the great company of famous verses of this sort . . . not unknown to any," made by Master Harvey, he next introduces his own translation of the first two eclogues of Virgil. Then dealing briefly with "the next verse in dignity" to the hexameter, *carmen elegiacum*, he closes his specimens with his version in sapphics of Hobbinol's song in the fourth eclogue of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, hoping to gratify his readers "with more and better verses of this sort" and being persuaded that "a little pain taking might furnish our speech with as much pleasant delight in this kind of verse as any other whatsoever." His final word is an exhortation to the famous poets of London to lend their aid toward turning the "rabble of bald rimes" to famous "works," comparable with the best in other tongues.

<sup>32</sup> Cp. Webbe's similarly loose remark (Smith, i, 242) that *Piers Plowman* "was the first that I have seen that observed the quantity of our verse without the curiosity of rime". Both remarks are repeated by Meres (cf. Smith, ii, 314, 315). Webbe commends Robert Wilmot for his enterprise of disrobing *Tancred and Gismund* "of his antique curiosity" (rime), "and adorning him with the approved guise of our state-liest English terms", blank verse (Smith, i, 412).

Puttenham, like Webbe, devotes much attention to verse, evidently considering it an essential element of poetry. "Poesy," he declares, "is a skill to speak and write harmonically: and verses or rime be a kind of musical utterance, by reason of a certain congruity of sounds pleasing the ear"<sup>33</sup> "Speech by metre is a kind of utterance more cleanly couched and more delicate to the ear than prose is, because it is more slipper upon the tongue, and withal tuneable and melodious, as a kind of music." It also has the advantage of being "briefer and more compendious, and easier to bear away and be retained in memory, than that which is contained in multitude of words and full of tedious ambage and long periods." Besides, it is "more eloquent and rhetorical than ordinary prose . . . because it is decked and set out with all manner of fresh colors and figures." Prose has less efficacy because it is more common, and because it is "wide and loose, and nothing numerous, nor contrived into measures and sounded with so gallant and harmonical accents, nor, in fine, allowed that figurative conveyance nor so great license in choice of words and phrases as metre is." In accordance with its high functions, the "metrical" is "a manner of utterance and language of extraordinary phrase, and brief and compendious, and above all others sweet and civil." Being by good wits brought to perfection, our vulgar riming poesy "is worthily to be preferred before any other manner of utterance in prose."<sup>34</sup>

As indicated by his proposition at the beginning of his treatise, "that there may be an art of our English poesy, as well as there is of the Latin and Greek,"<sup>35</sup> Puttenham is not an advocate of classical metres. Why should not the English have their art of poetry as well as the Greeks and Latins, "our language admitting no fewer rules and nice diversities than theirs?" They have "their feet whereupon their measures stand, and indeed is all the beauty of their poesy, and which feet we have not, nor as yet never went about to frame (the nature of our language and words not permitting it)". But "we have instead thereof twenty other curious points in that skill more than ever they had, by reason of our rime and tuneable concords or symphony, which they never observed."

Getting away from the Ascham tradition for the origin of rime, Puttenham traces it to the "Hebrews and Chaldees, who were more

<sup>33</sup> *Art of English Poesy*, Smith, ii, 67.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, 8-9, 24-25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, 5.

ancient than the Greeks." Moreover, it appears that "our vulgar riming poesy was common to all the nations of the world besides, whom the Latins and Greeks in special called barbarous." It, therefore, has the "no small credit" of being "the first and most ancient poesy, and the most universal." Our vulgar poesy, then, "more ancient than the artificial of the Greeks and Latins," and "coming by instinct of nature, which was before art of observation," a "natural poesy," "being aided and amended by art . . . is no less to be allowed and commended than theirs."<sup>36</sup> This patriotic view of rime, later elaborated and enforced by Daniel, is new in English critical writing and marks the beginning of a reaction against the opposing, though perhaps not less patriotic, view of Ascham and his followers.

Puttenham discusses riming among the ancients and in the time of Charlemagne and later, and at the end of his first book gives his "censure" on the "most commended writers in our English poesy."<sup>37</sup> Chaucer's "metre heroical of *Troilus and Cresseid*" he considers "very grave and stately"; and though "his other verses of the *Canterbury Tales* be but riding rime," as Gascoigne called it, it very well becomes "the matter of that pleasant pilgrimage." Gower's verse is "homely and without good measure . . . his rime wrested." The verse of *Piers Plowman* "is but loose metre." Wyatt and Surrey are reformers in their metre, which is "sweet and well-proportioned."

Among the topics treated in Puttenham's second book, "Of Proportion Poetical," are stanza, metre, and rime. In scanning English verse we allow, he says, "two syllables to make one short portion (suppose it a foot)." Because Saxon English was monosyllabic "there could be no such observation of times in the sound of our words, and for that reason we could not have the feet which the Greeks and Latins have in their metres." "Quantity with them consisteth in the number of their feet, and with us in the number of syllables . . . in every verse." In considering the "many sorts of measures we use in our vulgar,"<sup>38</sup> Puttenham does not favor an odd number of feet in a verse, and objects especially to composition in an odd number of syllables "unless it be holpen by the cæsura or by the accent." For instance, "a metre of eleven" as

I love thee, my darling, as ball of mine eye,

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*, 10, 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*, 61 ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*, 70, 71, 73 ff.

seems harsh to his ear and goes "ill favoredly and like a minstrel's music." A verse of eight syllables with cæsura in the middle is pleasant and "metre of ten syllables is very stately and heroical." Alexandrine verse is especially fit "for grave and stately matters." Verse of more than twelve syllables passes the "bounds of good proportion" and that of fourteen syllables with cæsura at the end of the eighth is tedious, for the length of the verse keeps the ear too long from the delight of the rime. "In every long verse the cæsura ought to be kept precisely." "Ancient rimers, as Chaucer, Lydgate, and others," are to be reprehended for neglecting it or using it licentiously. A rimer who will be tied to no rules may "range as he lists," but his work will be stigmatized as "rime doggerel."

Though English poetry lacks the "currentness of Greek and Latin feet," it has instead in the ends of verses the tuneable sound of rime. For this, English monosyllables serve "excellently well, because they do naturally and indifferently receive any accent, and in them, if they finish the verse, resteth the shrill accent of necessity," as it does not in polysyllables. Moreover, rime on the "last syllable of a verse is sweetest and most commendable." The same terminant syllables, as *aspire*, *respire*, should be avoided. Many makers offend in this;<sup>39</sup> a more delicate ear would change to *aspire*, *desire*. In such matters of cadence rests the "sweetness and cunning in our vulgar poesy."<sup>40</sup> The maker should "not wrench his word to help his rime, either by falsifying his accent, or by untrue orthography," though it is better to change the orthography "than to leave an unpleasant dissonance." He should avoid such licentious practice as that of Gower, who, having no words to rime with *joy*, impudently made his other verse end in the foreign word *roy*.

Since the rimes contain the chief part of music in verse, they should not be too far apart, "lest the ear should lose the tune and be defrauded of his delight," though the metre of a long line is "very grave and stately." On the other hand, middle rime, much used by "common rimers," should be avoided as in general should be the "too speedy return of one manner of tune," for this annoys and gluts the ear, being fit only for the popular songs of tavern minstrels or those sung in the streets from

<sup>39</sup> Wyatt and Surrey, Puttenham remarks (Smith, ii, 168), "more peradventure respecting the fitness and ponderosity of their words than the true cadence or symphony, were very licentious in this point".

<sup>40</sup> Smith, ii, 80, 84.

benches and barrel heads, or the old romances made for the common people. "Such were the rimes of Skelton, usurping the name of poet laureate," who "used both short distances and short measures, pleasing only the popular ear." In the courtly maker these should be banished utterly.<sup>41</sup>

Puttenham attaches importance to "proportion by situation," which includes variation of rime sequence and variation of the length of verses, and of which he gives a number of ocular examples.<sup>42</sup> By such variations poetry may be made "lighter or graver, or more merry, or mournful, and many ways passionate to the ear and heart of the hearer," counterfeiting, as it were, the harmonical tunes of vocal and instrumental music. The concurrence of these two proportions adds to poetry much beauty and force, and the various possibilities afford the poet wide opportunity of showing his skill. Following this, Puttenham gives a long chapter<sup>43</sup> on proportion in geometrical figures; in these "the maker is restrained to keep him within his bounds" and show his art and subtlety of device. Puttenham has obtained from an Italian gentleman, who learned of them in the courts of the orient, a choice collection of these figures, which, giving ocular examples, he recommends for the use of the delicate wits of the Court in entertaining their servants. "Passing from these courtly trifles, let us talk of our scholastic toys, that is, of the grammatical versifying of the Greeks and Latins, and see whether it might be reduced into our English art or no."

This question Puttenham discusses in a chapter with the cautious heading: "How if all manner of sudden innovations were not very scandalous, specially in the laws of any language or art, the use of the Greek and Latin feet might be brought into our vulgar poesy, and with good grace enough."<sup>44</sup> Referring with lukewarm approval to Stany-

<sup>41</sup> *Ib.*, 86, 87. Cp. Hall (*Satires*, Grosart, p. 104): "The fettering together of the series of the verses, with the bonds of like cadence or desinence of rime . . . if it be unusually abrupt, and not dependent in sense upon so near affinity of words, I know not what a loathsome kind of harshness and discordance it breedeth to any judicial ear". Cp. also Marlowe (Prol. *Tamburlaine*), who scorns the "jigging veins of riming mother wits". But Greene (1588; cf. Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ii, 391) disdains the innovation of blank verse: "If there be any in England that set the end of scholarship in blank verse, I think it is either the humor of a novice that tickless them with self-love, or too much frequenting the hothouse (to use the German proverb) hath sweat out all the greatest part of their wits".

<sup>42</sup> *Ib.*, 89 ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Ib.*, 95 ff.

<sup>44</sup> *Ib.*, 117.

hurst's translation of Virgil, he takes up this "scholastic curiosity"; and desiring not to omit information on "any point of subtilty" or novelty, he will by "idle observations show how one may easily and commodiously lead all those feet of the ancients into our vulgar language," whereby English metres may perhaps acquire "a more pleasant numerosity." Although he does not consider it discreet or courteous on the authority of personal judgment to attempt to discredit our "forefathers' manner of vulgar poesy" or to bring about "the alteration or peradventure total destruction of the same," he proceeds to show that, observing English accent and without following the license of quantitative verse, most of the classical metres can, in view of the large infusion of "Norman English," be introduced into English verse. He would take advantage of indifferent accents and of simplified orthography, but would not compromise English accent or idiom. After showing in detail how English words are adaptable to the classical metres, he concludes that "our plat" in this point may "be larger and much surmount that which Stanyhurst first took in hand" in his Virgil; though we should gain the approval "first of the delicate ears" rather "than of the rigorous and severe dispositions." We cannot, however, possibly follow all the "metrical observations" of the ancients, for we cannot, as they did, assign to our syllables absolute quantitative values. Puttenham continues the discussion for three or four chapters, giving copious examples of English iambics, trochees, dactyls, anapests, and other less common metres. Keeping a tentative attitude and remembering that "time only and custom have authority," especially "in all cases of language," he concludes by wishing "the continuance of our old manner of poesy, scanning our verse by syllables rather than by feet, and using most commonly the word iambic and sometimes the trochaic, which ye shall discern by their accents, and now and then a dactyl, keeping precisely our symphony or rime without any other mincing measures, which an idle inventive head could easily devise."<sup>45</sup>

Nash, who in 1589 lashes the "idiot art-masters" that "mounted on the stage of arrogance think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse,"<sup>46</sup> refers the question "whether riming be poetry" to the "judgment of the learned." Turbervile, he thinks, "in translating . . . attributed too much to the

<sup>45</sup> *Ib.*, 134.

<sup>46</sup> Pref. *Menaphon*, Smith, i, 308. Cp. Greene's famous reference (in *A Groat's-worth of Wit*) to Shakespeare — "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you".

necessity of rime"; and "who is it that reading *Bevis of Hampton* can forbear laughing," if he mark the "scrambling shift" to end verses alike?—and he propounds a few couplets "for the reader's recreation."<sup>a</sup> Stronger still is his ridicule of the hexameters of Stanyhurst and Harvey. The former, he declares, "inspired with an hexameter fury, recalled to life whatever hissed barbarism hath been buried this hundred year," and he gives a specimen, mischievously travestied, of his "ruffe raffe roaring."<sup>48</sup> To Harvey's defense of the English hexameter he retorts: "Our tongue is nothing too good, but too bad to imitate the Greek and Latin." He grants the hexameter verse "to be a gentleman of an ancient house (so is many an English beggar); yet this clime of ours he cannot thrive in. Our speech is too craggy for him to set his plow in; he goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one syllable, and down the dale in another; retaining no part of that stately smooth gait which he vaunts himself with amongst the Greeks and Latins."<sup>49</sup>

Sir John Harington does not "purpose . . . . to argue whether Plato, Zenophon, and Erasmus writing fictions and dialogues

<sup>a</sup> *Ib.*, 329.

<sup>48</sup> *Ib.*, 315.

<sup>49</sup> *Strange News*, Smith, ii, 240. Nash burlesques the first two lines of Harvey's *Encomium Lauri* (see Grosart's ed. Hall's *Complete Poems*, p. xvi):

What might I call this tree? a Laurel? O bonny Laurel:  
Needs to thy bows will I bow this knee, and veil my bonetto.  
O thou weather-cock, that stands on the top of All Hallows,  
Come thy ways if thou darst, for thy crown, and take the wall on us.

Bishop Hall (Bk. I, Satire VI) in humorous vein also indicates his attitude toward classical versing:

Another scorns the homespun thread of rimes,  
Matched out with lofty feet of elder times:  
Give me the numbered verse that Virgil sung,  
And Virgil self shall speak the English tongue: .  
Manhood and garboils shall he chant with changed feet  
And headstrong dactyls making music meet.  
The nimble dactyls striving to outgo  
The drawling spondees pacing it below.  
The lingering spondees, laboring to delay,  
The breathless dactyls with a sudden stay.  
Who ever saw a colt wanton and wild,  
Yoked with a slow-foot ox on fallow field,  
Can right agreed how handsomely besets  
Dull spondees with the English dactylets.

in prose may justly be called poets, or whether Lucan writing a story in verse be an historiographer."<sup>60</sup> He takes some pains, however, to justify verse as one of the parts of poetry, the other part being "fiction and imitation," though he thinks that it suffices to show "by the authority of sacred Scriptures" that "both parts . . . are allowable." Verse, "the clothing or ornament . . . hath many good uses." It aids the memory; it has "special grace . . . in the forcible manner of phrase, in which, if it be well made, it far excelleth loose speech or prose"; and its "pleasure and sweetness to the ear . . . makes the discourse pleasant unto us often time when the matter itself is harsh and unacceptable."<sup>61</sup> As regards a point in Harington's own verse, namely, his use of two-syllabled and three-syllabled rimes, with which some have "nicely found fault," the former at least are warranted by approval of the French and the authority of Sir Philip Sidney, who "not only useth them but affecteth them"; the latter he intended as a somewhat rare ornament, though he confesses that it is better not to sow with the whole sack, as he "would have the ear fed and not cloyed with these pleasing and sweet falling metres."<sup>62</sup>

Chapman, at the end of the century, with warrant takes an attitude of assurance in the sufficiency of English verse.

Sweet poesy

Will not be clad in her supremacy  
With those strange garments (Rome's hexameters),  
As she is English; but in right prefers  
Our native robes (put on with skillful hands—  
English heroics) to those antic garlands.<sup>63</sup>

In putting forth his translation of *Achilles Shield* he defends the length of his verse against the censure of "quidditical Italianists"; for talk they "of what proportion soever their strooting lips affect, unless it be these couplets into which I have hastily translated this Shield, they shall never do Homer so much right, in any octaves, canzons, conzonets, or with whatsoever fustian epigraphs they shall entitle their measures."<sup>64</sup> Chapman further declares the superiority of English for verse, and es-

<sup>60</sup> Pref. *Orlando Furioso*, Smith, ii, 196.

<sup>61</sup> *Ib.*, 206, 207.

<sup>62</sup> *Ib.*, 221.

<sup>63</sup> *Shadow of Night* (1594), Smith, i, liv.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, ii, 306.

pecially of monosyllables for rime, in verses apparently intended to be illustrative:

And for our tongue that still is so impair'd  
By traveling linguists, I can prove it clear,  
That no tongue hath the muses utterance heir'd  
For verse, and that sweet music to the ear  
Strook out of rime, so naturally as this;  
Our monosyllables so kindly fall,  
And meet approved in rimes as they did kiss;  
French and Italian most immetrical,  
Their many syllables in harsh collision  
Fall as they break their necks; their bastard rimes  
Saluting as they jostled in transition;  
And set our teeth on edge.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Prefixed to transl. *Iliad*. Cp. Marston, who in his *Scourge of Villainy* — though it is written in rime — complains:

Alas, poor idle sound!  
Since I first Phoebus knew, I never found  
Thy interest in sacred poesy;  
Thou to invention add'st but surquedry,  
A gaudy ornature, but hast no part  
In that soul-pleasing high infused art.

Ben Jonson also writes "A Fit of Rime against Rime" (*Underwoods*, XLVIII):

Rime, the rack of finest wits,  
That expresseth but by fits  
True conceit,  
Spoiling senses of their treasure,  
Cozening judgment with a measure,  
But false weight;  
Wresting words from their true calling;  
Propping verse for fear of falling  
To the ground;  
Jointing syllables, drowning letters,  
Fastening vowels, as with fetters  
They were bound . . . . .  
Greek was free from rime's infection,  
Happy Greek, by this protection,  
Was not spoiled.  
Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,  
Is not yet free from rime's wrongs,  
But rests foiled . . . . .  
Vulgar languages that want  
Words, and sweetness, and be scant

Thomas Campion, in dedicating to Lord Buckhurst his *Observations in the Art of English Poesy*, declares that in view of the fact that poetry "is the chief beginner and maintainer of eloquence, not only helping the ear with the acquaintance of sweet numbers, but also raising the mind to a more high and lofty conceit"; he has "studied to induce a true form of versifying into our language, for the vulgar and unartificial custom of riming hath . . . . deter'd many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesy."<sup>66</sup> His undertaking, so ably refuted by Samuel Daniel, ends the chapter of Elizabethan attempts to introduce "reformed versifying."<sup>67</sup>

Campion begins by "declaring the unaptness of rime," "that vulgar and easy kind of poesy" which began in the "lack-learning times" of "illiterate monks and friars" and "in barbarized Italy" after the decline of learning. Though he realizes that "there is grown a kind of prescription in the use of rime, to forestall the right of true numbers, as also the consent of many nations," against which it may seem vain to contend; yet "all this and more" cannot deter him "from a lawful defense of perfection" or make him "any whit the sooner adhere to that which is lame and unbecoming." As for custom, "ill uses are to be abolisht . . . . things naturally imperfect cannot be perfected by use." Why not recall the older and better custom, "yet flourishing," of the "numerous poesy" of the ancients? The "unaptness of our tongues

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Of true measure,  
Tyrant rime hath so abused,  
That they long since have refused  
Other cesure . . . .

<sup>66</sup> Smith, ii, 327.

<sup>67</sup> Another curious attempt late in the century is to be found in *The First Book of the Preservation of King Henry the VII* (cf. Smith, i, 377). The writer, who zealously advocates classical metres both in his prose preface and in his verses, scorns the ignorant rimers, "whose books are stuffed with lines of prose, with a rythm in the end; which every fiddler or piper can make upon a theme given". Although Spenser and others have excelled "in that kind of prose-rythm", he "would to God they had done so well in true hexameters" and thereby "beautified our language" in emulation of the Greeks and Latins. "Master Ascham had much ado to make two or three verses in English, but now every scholar can make some. What language so hard, harsh, or barbarous, that time and art will not amend? . . . . as gold surpasseth lead, so the hexameters surpass rythm-prose".

It may be noted that the 1602 edition of Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* was advertised as containing "both . . . . rime and measured verse".

and the difficulty of imitation disheartens us: again, the facility and popularity of rime creates as many poets as hot summer flies."<sup>88</sup>

After pausing to deprecate "that absurd following of the letter<sup>89</sup> amongst our English so much of late affected, but now hist out of Paul's Churchyard," Campion leaves to its own ruin this folly, with which he closely associates that of riming, and turns to the metrical faults of rime verse. The ear, he says, is the chief judge of proportion; "but in our kind of riming what proportion is there kept where there remains such a confused inequality of syllables? Iambic and trochaic feet, which are opposed by nature, are by all rimers confounded." A poet should consider not only the number of syllables but also their quantitative value; but the rimers oftentimes ignorantly allow a pyrrhic in place of an iambic, "curtailing their verse, which they supply in reading with a ridiculous and unapt drawing of their speech. As for example:

Was it my destiny, or dismal chance?"

Here the last two syllables of *destiny*, though both short, stand for a foot, and "cause the line to fall out shorter than it ought by nature."<sup>90</sup> From these and similar remarks it is clear that Campion, disregarding the rhythmical progression that carries a verse through as iambic, stickles for quantitative values of syllables according to a system that he has partially worked out based largely upon Latin rules.

Another fault in rime "altogether intolerable" to Campion is that "it enforceth a man oftentimes to abjure his matter and extend a short conceit beyond all bounds of art". Indeed, "a curse of nature," he thinks, is "laid upon such rude poesy," writers themselves being ashamed of it and hearers in contempt calling it "riming and ballating." If Italians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, who "with commendation have written in rime, were demanded whether they had rather the books they have publisht . . . should remain as they are in rime or be translated into the ancient numbers of the Greeks and Romans, would they not answer into numbers? What honor were it then for our

<sup>88</sup> Smith, ii, 329, 330.

<sup>89</sup> Sidney had frowned upon the dictionary method of "coursing of a letter", with "rimes running in rattling rows" (Smith, i, 202, and Sonnet XV). Shakespeare (*Love's Labor's Lost*, IV, ii, 56) holds the abuse up to ridicule in the character of Holofernes, who, in "an extemporal epitaph on the death of the deer," "will something affect the letter, for it argues facility". It begins:

The preyful princess pierc'd and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, ii, 331.

English language to be the first that after so many years of barbarism could second the perfection of the industrious Greeks and Romans!"<sup>61</sup>

Campion next proceeds to demonstrate<sup>62</sup> "that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers, proper to itself." "The heroical verse that is distinguisht by the dactyl," he declares, has often been attempted in English, "but with passing pitiful success; and no wonder, seeing it is an attempt altogether against the nature of our language." Rejecting the dactyl therefore as unfit, there remain the iambic and trochaic feet, both of which "accord in proportion with our British syllables." These two kinds of feet give rise to the "two principal kinds of verses" from which we may easily derive other forms.

In successive chapters Campion describes and illustrates "eight several kinds of English numbers." Beginning with iambic verse, he distinguishes between pure and licentiate iambic and gives rules for the substitutions allowable in the latter. After giving several specimens<sup>63</sup> of iambic verse (blank verse), discussing its licenses, and mentioning the possibility of varying the *cæsura*, he declares that "these are those numbers which nature in our English destinates to the tragic and heroic poem." He thinks further that this kind of verse being "made a little licentiate, that it may thereby imitate our common talk, will excellently serve for comedies."<sup>64</sup> Next Campion explains and illustrates "iambic

<sup>61</sup> *Ib.*, 332.

<sup>62</sup> *Ib.*, 332 ff.

<sup>63</sup> The longest specimen of licentiate iambic is evidently inserted partly for the persuasive value of its content:

Go numbers, boldly pass, stay not for aid  
Of shifting rime, that easy flatterer,  
Whose witchcraft can the ruder ears beguile.  
Let your smooth feet, enur'd to purer art,  
True measures tread. What if your pace be slow,  
And hops not like the Grecian elegies?  
It is yet graceful, and well fits the state  
Of words ill-breathed and not shap't to run.  
Go then, but slowly, till your steps be firm;  
Tell them that pity or perversely scorn  
Poor English poesy as the slave to rime,  
You are those lofty numbers that revive  
Triumphs of princes and stern tragedies . . . .

<sup>64</sup> It does not seem necessary to conclude from the above remarks, as some have done, that Campion was ignorant of the use of blank verse or "licentiate iambic" in contemporary English drama.

dimeter, or English march",<sup>66</sup> which is made up of two feet, usually trochees, and an odd syllable common. The "English trochaic verse"<sup>66</sup> of five feet, though "diversely used," "most of all delights in epigrams," and Campion gives specimens of his own "light poems in this kind." "English elegiac"<sup>67</sup> has for the first verse a licentiate iambic and for the second "two united dimeters," the alternation continuing throughout. The fifth, sixth, and seventh kinds are English sapphics, especially "fit for ditties and odes, which we may call lyrical." These have stanza forms: the first<sup>68</sup> has three long and one short trochaic verses; the second,<sup>69</sup> a dimeter and three trochaic verses; the third,<sup>70</sup> four trochaic and a dimeter. The eighth kind, anacreontic verse,<sup>71</sup> though licentiate, is "passing graceful" in English and excellently fits a madrigal or any "lofty or tragical matter." It consists of two feet: the first either a spondee or trochee, the second a trochee.

Having shown something of the resources of "reformed unrimed numbers" by his description of these eight "kinds of English numbers simple or compound," which by long observation he has "found agreeable with the nature of our syllables," Campion presumes that "the learned will not only imitate but also polish and amplify" them with

<sup>66</sup> Raving war, begot  
In the thirsty sands.

<sup>66</sup> Kate can fancy only beardless husbands,  
That's the cause she shakes off ev'ry suitor.

<sup>67</sup> Constant to none, but ever false to me,  
Traitor still to love through thy faint desires.

<sup>68</sup> Faith's pure shield, the Christian Diana,  
England's glory crowned with all divineness,  
Live long with triumphs to bless thy people  
At thy sight triumphing.

<sup>69</sup> Rose-cheekt Laura, come,  
Sing thou smoothly with thy beauty's  
Silent music, either other  
Sweetly gracing.

<sup>70</sup> Just beguiler,  
Kindest love, yet only chastest,  
Royal in thy smooth denials,  
Frowning or demurely smiling,  
Still my pure delight.

<sup>71</sup> Follow, follow,  
Though with mischief.

their own inventions. Though "some ears accustomed altogether to the fatness of rime may perhaps except against the cadences of these numbers," judicial examination will show that "they close of themselves so perfectly that the help of rime were not only in them superfluous but also absurd."<sup>72</sup>

Treating next the quantity of syllables,<sup>73</sup> Campion finds that English, because of the monosyllabic character of the language, may claim more license than Latin or Greek. For this reason the dactyl, tribrach, and anapest are not greatly missed. Accent above all else "is diligently to be observed, for chiefly by the accent in any language the true value of the syllables is to be measured." The only impediment that can alter the accent is position. In a word like *Trumpington*, for instance, though we accent the second syllable short, yet "it is naturally long" and must be so "held of every composer." The "first rule" then is to observe "the nature of the accent, which we must ever follow." Position, "the next rule," Campion explains with the caution that since English orthography differs from common pronunciation, sound rather than spelling must be the test of quantity—as, "for *love-sick*, *love-sĭk*; "for *dangerous*, *dangerŭs*"; "for *though*, *tho*." Having given his rules of quantity as they came into his memory, Campion trusts that time and practice may produce "others more methodical." In the meantime he leaves many points to the judgment of the poets, concluding "that there is no art begun and perfected at one enterprise."

But this "enterprise," on foot ever since the college days of Watson and Ascham, now at last receives its quietus at the hands of Samuel Daniel, who in his *Defense of Rime* not only effectually refutes and silences Campion but possibly influences him to continue his riming by cleverly complimenting his "commendable rimes," which "have given heretofore to the world the best notice of this worth."<sup>74</sup> Daniel, rather magnifying the possible influence of "this detractor . . . a man of fair parts and good reputation," enters upon his argument in a spirit of national defense against "the wrong done . . . every rimer in this universal island." He "could well have allowed" Campion's "numbers, had he not disgraced our rime, which both custom and nature doth most powerfully defend: custom that is above all law, nature that

<sup>72</sup> Smith, ii, 350.

<sup>73</sup> *Ib.*, 351 ff.

<sup>74</sup> *Ib.*, 358.

is above all art.'<sup>75</sup> Every language, Daniel believes, has its own number or measure, "which custom, entertaining by the allowance of the ear, doth endenize and make natural."

Verse, continues Daniel, is a "frame of words consisting of *rithmus* or *metrum*, number or measure . . . . disposed into divers fashions, according to the humor of the composer and the set of the time." Evidently having in mind Campion's quantities and perversions of accent, he declares that rythms, "familiar amongst all nations . . . . fall as naturally already in our language as ever art can make them, being such as the ear of itself doth marshal in their proper rooms; and they of themselves will not willingly be put out of their rank, and that in such a verse as best comports with the nature of our language." "As Greek and Latin verse consists of the number and quantity of syllables," so does English verse consist of "measure and accent." Although the latter does "not strictly observe long and short syllables, yet it most religiously respects the accent; and as the short and long make number, so the acute and grave accent yield harmony. And harmony is likewise number; so that the English verse then hath number, measure, and harmony in the best proportion of music. Which being more certain and more resounding, works that effect of motion with as happy success as either the Greek or Latin."<sup>76</sup>

Rime, "an excellency added to this work of measure, and a harmony far happier than any proportion antiquity could ever show us," Daniel thinks, adds "more grace, and hath more of delight than ever bare numbers, howsoever they be forced to run in our slow language, can possibly yield." It is a natural harmonical cadence, acceptable alike to barbarous and civil nations, its universality arguing its general "power in nature on all." Such "force hath it in nature" that "Latin numbers, notwithstanding their excellency, seemed not sufficient to satisfy the ear of the world" and "the most learned of all nations" labored exceedingly and with much success "to bring those numbers likewise unto it." "Ill customs are to be left," as says the adversary of rime; but "how can that be taken for an ill custom which nature hath thus ratified, all

<sup>75</sup> *Ib.*, 359. Cp. Bacon (Smith, i, liv): "This is blameworthy, that certain overzealous admirers of antiquity have attempted to reduce the modern tongues to the ancient measures (heroics, elegiacs, sapphics, etc.), which the genius of their own languages rejects and which their ears none the less abominate. In matters of this sort the sense is to be preferred to the precepts of art . . . . And in fact it is not art but rather abuse of art when it does not represent nature but perverts it".

<sup>76</sup> *Ib.*, 360.

nations received, time so long confirmed," its effects being to delight the ear, stir the heart, and satisfy the judgment?<sup>77</sup> Let the world then enjoy what it knows and likes. The "tyrannical rules of idle rhetoric" cannot avail against custom or the forces that "sway the affections of men."

Daniel with common sense discernment next answers one of the main arguments urged by all advocates of classical metres—namely, that if these metres were adopted ignorant and incapable writers would be deterred from poetizing. Not so, he says, "for no doubt as idle wits will write in that kind, as do now in this"; "imitation will after, though it break her neck," and "we are like to have lean numbers instead of fat rime." Moreover, this "multitude of idle writers can be no disgrace to the good; for the same fortune in one proportion or other is proper in a like season to all states in their turn; and the same unmeasurable confluence of scribblers happened when measures were most in use among the Romans," their plenty having "bred the same waste and contempt as ours doth now."<sup>78</sup> As with them too so will posterity out of our abundance sift and preserve that which is worthy. Thus does Daniel with his historical perspective bring to bear upon an old question new light and wisdom.

Furthermore, why, he asks, should we labor "ever to seem to be more than we are," afflicting our best delights with "laborsome curiosity," "as if art were ordained to afflict nature, and that we could not go but in fetters?" All must be "wrapped up in unnecessary intrications." This, however, might be applied to the "multiplicity of rimes, as is used by many in sonnets." But here rime itself seems to have "begot conceit beyond expectation . . . for sure in an eminent spirit, whom nature hath fitted for that mystery, rime is no impediment to his conceit, but rather gives him wings to mount . . . beyond his power to a far happier flight." We need not be slaves to rime, but rather we can "make it a most excellent instrument to serve us."<sup>79</sup>

Not without better reason, he insists, should we "yield our consents captive to the authority of antiquity"; "all our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of

<sup>77</sup> *Ib.*, 361, 362.

<sup>78</sup> *Ib.*, 363, 364.

<sup>79</sup> *Ib.*, 365. Dryden's viewpoint is characteristically different: "But that benefit which I consider most in it [rime], because I have not seldom found it, is that it bounds and circumscribes the fancy. For imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless that, like an high ranging spaniel, it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment" (Ded. *Rival Ladies*).

nature as well as they"; and "it is not the observing of trochaics nor their iambics that will make our writings aught the wiser." Moreover, it is "but a touch of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross." Man is always "eminent in some one thing or other that fits his humor and the times."<sup>80</sup> Nations without Greek and Latin or anapests and tribrachs have developed culture and worth, and the earlier native excellence of the English is not to be despised.

Indeed, Daniel, being a true Englishman, considers it but "fantastic giddiness to forsake the way of other men, especially where it lies tolerable." "But shall we not tend to perfection? Yes: and that ever best by going on in the course we are in," with the advantage of nature and experience, rather than by ever beginning anew. Had the adversary of rime "taught us by his own proceedings this way of perfection, and therein framed us a poem of that excellence as should have put all down, and been the masterpiece of these times, we should all have admired him. But to deprave the present form of writing, and to bring us nothing but a few loose epigrams . . . . giveth us cause to suspect the performance." We are, moreover, taught to imitate the ancients and also to disobey their rules; "told that here is the perfect art of versifying, which in conclusion is yet confessed to be unperfect." And "who hath constituted him to be the Radamanthus, thus to torture syllables and adjudge them their perpetual doom?" Next year another tyrant might arise to abrogate his rules. Were it not far better, then, "to hold fast to our old custom than to stand thus distracted with uncertain laws, wherein right shall have as many faces as it pleases passion to make it?" Indeed, "of all these eight several kinds of new promised numbers . . . . we have only what was our own before . . . . but apparelled in foreign titles." As for the "imagined quantities of syllables, which have ever been held free and indifferent in our language, who can enforce us to take knowledge of them" and bend our language to foreign invention? English poets may find, "without all these unnecessary precepts," what numbers best fit the idiom of the language and the proper and natural places for accents, taught by "nature and a judicial ear."<sup>81</sup>

Let rimers, then, be in no way discouraged in their endeavors "by this brave alarm," but rather animated to exercise their best powers,

<sup>80</sup> *Ib.*, 366, 367.

<sup>81</sup> *Ib.*, 373, 375, 376-379.

thereby turning to advantage the intended harm of the adversary. Rime has become the "fittest dwelling of our invention," and Daniel stands forth "only to make good the place we have thus taken up, and to defend the sacred monuments erected therein, which contain the honor of the dead, the fame of the living, the glory of peace, and the best power of our speech, and wherein so many honorable spirits have sacrificed to memory their dearest passions, showing by what divine influence they have been moved, and under what stars they lived."<sup>82</sup>

Yet notwithstanding all that he has delivered in defense of rime, Daniel is not so much in love with his own mystery as to be opposed to "the reformation and the better settling these measures of ours." Many things might be "more certain and better ordered," but he will not take it upon himself to be a teacher. He must confess that to his own ear "those continual cadences of couplets<sup>83</sup> used in long and continued poems are very tiresome and unpleasing"; but this he will not presume to condemn. He thinks, however, that "sometimes to beguile the ear" by "passing over the rime, as no bound to stay us in the line where the violence of the matter will break through, is rather graceful than otherwise." "Thereby they who care not for verse or rime may . . . please themselves with a well-measured prose." The "adversary," moreover, has wrought upon Daniel to "think a tragedy would

<sup>82</sup> *Ib.*, 380, 381.

<sup>83</sup> Cp. Ben Jonson (*Conv. Drummond*, at beginning),—"That he had an intention to perfect an epic poem entitled *Heroologia* . . . all in couplets, for he detesteth all other rimes. Said he had written a Discourse of Poesy both against Campion and Daniel, especially this last, where he proves couplets to be the bravest sort of verses, especially when they are broken, like hexameters; and that cross rimes and stanzas (because the purpose would lead him beyond eight lines to conclude) were all forced". But Milton takes a different view in his explanation in the second edition of *Paradise Lost* of "that which stumbled many . . . why the poem rimes not". "The measure", he says, "is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter and lame metre . . . a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another; not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it is rather to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem, from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming".

indeed comport best with a blank verse." In some of his own Epistles, in order to avoid "over-glutting the ear with that always certain and full encounter of rime," he has essayed to alter the usual place of meeting and to set it further off by one verse, but as yet he cannot please himself therein, "this alternate or cross rime holding still the best place" in his affection. He also avoids the deformity of mixing masculine and feminine rimes, though "indeed there is no right in these things that are continually in a wandering motion, carried with the violence of uncertain likings, being but only the time that gives them their power."<sup>84</sup>

Although the conclusion of the verse controversy was necessarily somewhat like that of *Rasselas*, "in which nothing is concluded"; yet the aspirations aroused by contact with classical and renaissance culture had bred a not altogether unwholesome discontent in matters of versification, and the various excursions outside the happy valley of native poesy were not wholly in vain. The native way of riming poetry was by many men of letters from Ascham to Milton considered barbarous and unauthorized, disorderly and without rule. Its accentual structure of line, though largely haphazard, seemed monotonous; its ever recurrent rime cadences, often straining the sense, were cloying and wearisome. Its associations were common and vulgar; it was inelegant, unrefined, unlearned. In general, it served to discredit poetic art and to deter best poets. Here were the learned Grecians and Romans with their world famous examples inspiring to a more excellent way and with definite and authoritative rules. Why not imitate them rather than follow the Goths and Huns? A more learned and elegant mode of verse would be a powerful factor in discrediting and silencing the rimesters and in gaining prestige for the art of poetry. The stigma of barbarism in English poetry would be blotted out; the English language would be honored and beautified; England would put forth famous works comparable with those of other nations.

The trial is made, repeatedly, and in their excursions in quest of more excellent ways for English poetry the discontented poets and critics gain much useful experience. Their studies and attempted adaptations of the prosody of other nations serve to reveal both the limitations and the resources of their own language. Most of them learn by experiment that English accent cannot be ignored in any application of classical rules, and that it is an almost hopeless undertaking to give absolute quanti-

<sup>84</sup> Smith, ii, 382, 383.

tative values to English syllables. These experiments and investigations on the other hand disclose many new possibilities of orderliness, variety, and harmony within the limits of the natural capabilities of the native tongue. Further, the expositions of the weaknesses of rime serve to suggest remedies for overcoming them and to give help toward the reconciliation of rime and reason as well as rime and artistic merit. Light also is thrown on subsidiary questions, such as those of stanza, orthography, alliteration, cæsure, and the relative merits of monosyllables and polysyllables. The discussions are for the most part unfavorable toward rigid rules, being tentative and open-minded, and animated by the spirit of emulation and advancement.

Indeed, the whole body of verse criticism is unified in the purpose of improving English poetry and discrediting the work of rimesters and poet-apes. This is the aim of treatises advocating classical metres; the aim of such expository works as that of Gascoigne. It is the aim of Sidney in his emphasis of the idea that it requires more to make a poet than skill in versifying. It is the aim of Daniel, whose views were apparently acceptable as a sort of final judgment of the whole question. The way to perfection, he sees, is "by going on in the course we are in." Recognizing the principle that different ages and different nations must have freedom for the expression of their own distinctive genius, he insists that the English writers have already demonstrated their poetic powers in monuments evolved in accordance with the spirit of the race and the genius of the language. The peculiar poetic genius or spirit of the English people should be fostered and allowed to develop in its own way. Any such change as that proposed by the classical metrists would most disastrously thwart the development of national poetry, violating as it would the two great forces of custom and nature: "custom that is before all law, nature that is above all art."

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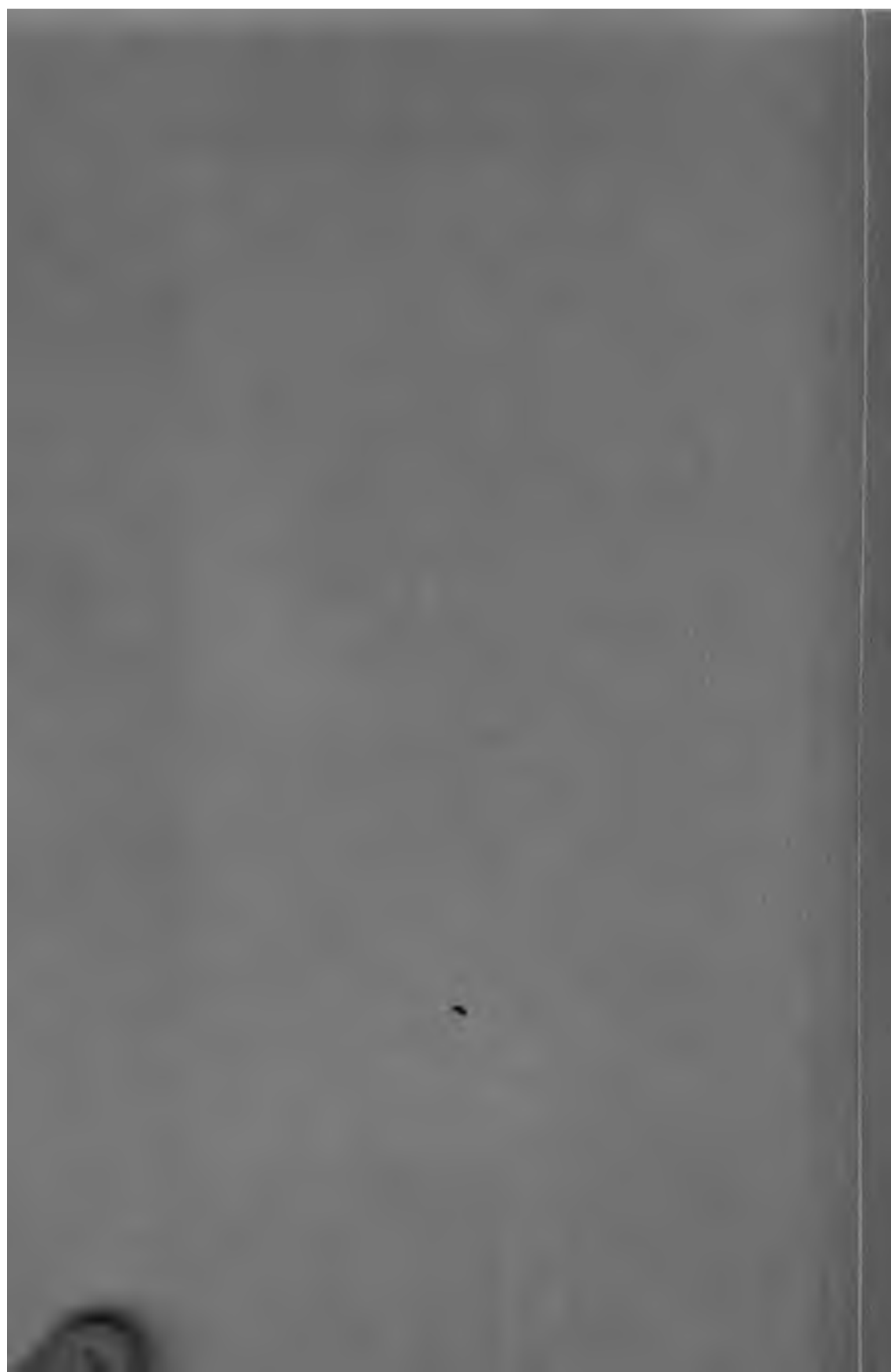
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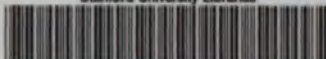
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